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RELEASE DATE LIMBO: PART I

IMPOSTER (Dimension)

Wasn't it a year ago we were talking up this intriguing-sounding Phil Dick adaptation in which Gary Sinise plays a weapons engineer who's suspected of being an alien spy? As is its wont, Dimension parent Maramax has sat on this project since that time—whether this says something about the film's quality or is just further evidence of the company's legendary aversion to projects it considers hard sells, we can't tell. In any case, it looks like the film will finally get its debut this fall, and then we in the audience can make up our minds for ourselves.

Fall

MEGIDDO (BX Entertainment)

September 21

The sequel to THE OMEGA CODE, that science fiction film for people who hate science, will attempt to repeat its predecessor's startling (some would say diamyeing) box office success by opening in limited markets and counting on its core audience of fundamentalist Christians to pack the theaters. Star power, such as it is, is provided by the likes of Michael York, Michael Ironside, and Diane Venora. What little we know about the plot is that Satanic doings will still threaten the world, no doubt while the faithful sit in the audience and pray that New York gets smoked first.

ONE HOUR PHOTO (Fox)

September 26

Want to get really creeped out by Robin Williams? No, we're not asking you to watch BICENTENNIAL MAN. We're just suggesting that this dark thriller—about a photo shop employee (Williams) who becomes obsessed with a family he sees in some snaps—may be the first, welcome step in the rehabilitation of the too-frequently squishy comedian/actor. The guy has more talent than his recent projects have permitted him to exercise; let's hope he taps into the inner psycho that will keep us awake at night.

SIMONE (New Line)

October 12

Andrew Niccol, the director of GATTACA—an art film so subtly sophisticated that it may as well have been straight drama—teams up with Al Pacino to tell the tale of a producer who decides to cast a CG actress as the lead of his next movie. No small amount of fun was stirred up when an erroneous rumor circulated that the film would feature a genuine synthesizer, but in fact a flesh-and-blood actress, known only as "A.G.," is playing the role. An intriguing concept, if one didn't suspect that SHREK and FINAL FANTASY may have already stolen Mr. Niccol's thunder.



CFQ PREVIEW

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two from the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Dan Persons

BONES (New Line)

October 26

Snoop Dogg plays Jimmy Bones, "a legendary protector and patron of his thriving neighborhood," who dies and then rises from the grave twenty years later to help battle crime and drugs. Ernest Dickerson is directing, so at least this won't get anywhere near METEOR MAN territory. At the very least, you can enjoy Pam Grier's second genre appearance this year.

13 GHOSTS (Warner Bros.)

October 26

Another William Castle title gets a revamp from Joel Silver's B-movie shingle. Shannon Elizabeth, Tony Shaloub, and F. Murray Abraham are among the more recognizable names, but there's no word whether audience members will have to use the special viewers that were the most famous feature of the original film.

HALLOWEEN: THE HOMECOMING (Dimension)

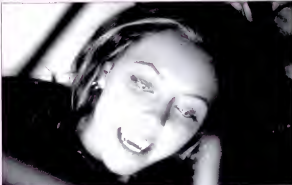
Fall

What's going on with orange juice cartons? Used to be all you had to was load back a couple of laps, pour, and you had yourself a tasty glass of liquid sunshine. Now, there are caps to unscrew, there are plugs to pull—I don't know if I'm getting a beverage or breaking into Fort Knox. And then what are you supposed to do with that cockamamie plastic plugging once you manage to rip it out of the spout? Not only do I feel like I'm smogging a grenade on the beach at Normandy every time I crack open a new carton, but now I have to live with the ecological guilt of throwing away this useless bit of plastic detritus. Can you imagine those things piling up at the landfill? I mean, really! Oh, and Jamie Lee Curtis has a walk-on in this, the eighth chapter of the seemingly indestructible series.

WAKING LIFE (Fox Searchlight)

Fall

Ladies and gentlemen, Richard Linklater directs...an animated film?! Sort of. Actually, the famed director of SLACKER shot digital video footage of live actors, which then was converted into surreal, animated imagery. What we know of the plot is that Wiley Wiggins is a guy who'll be moving through various, dream-like encounters. If you look closely, you may catch Ethen Hawke somewhere in there.



RELEASE DATE LIMBO: PART II

GINGER SNAPS

It's only been recovering the most enthusiastic buzz we've heard in years for a horror film, yet this groundbreaking coming-of-age-com-we-revolt flick is facing apparently near-insurmountable hurdles in finding a U.S. distributor. God knows, it isn't as if we went to deny SCARY MOVIE 2 of its two bazillion screening venues (Sarcasm!), but wouldn't it be swell if a handful of theaters were showing something that really scared you?

CFQ NEWS

BETTER NEWS ABOUT GOOD OMENS

Neil Gaiman Projects from Terry Gilliam; Henson Co.

by Mike Watt

Good Omens, the delightful and terribly funny Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett romp about the apocalyptic and the 12-year-old onlooker who has brought it about is on track to be the next project directed by Terry Gilliam, who is also adapting this novel in collaboration with Tony Gishon. This is, for many, wonderful news, and in an early morning phone call, we asked Mr. Gaiman if he was at liberty to talk about the project. "Well, yes, I'm at liberty to talk about it but there's not a lot I can say," he began. "I spoke to Terry [Gilliam] about eight weeks ago, mainly just to confirm his address so that I could send him a copy of *American Gods* in proof. [He and Tony Gishon are] on the second draft of the script... And he told me a little bit about some of the things they were doing and they all sounded completely in the spirit of this book. It's one of those occasions where I would rather see a bad Terry Gilliam version of *GOOD OMENS* than anyone else's good movie."

That *GOOD OMENS* is going into production is due to the tragedy that recently befell Gilliam's project, *THE MAN WHO KILLED DON QUIXOTE*, which was to star Johnny Depp. This movie died on the second day of production, though not because of anything the suits in Hollywood decreed, but because of numerous acts-of-God: a flash flood that destroyed numerous sets; a sudden illness that hospitalized the film's star, Jean Rochefort. "Terrible thing, having a movie fall apart on you," Gaiman said. "After spending so much time and effort bringing it to fruition I hope one day he gets back to *DON QUIXOTE*, and gets to tell his story."

While struggling with *American Gods*, his new novel, Gaiman took some time out to finish a children's book called *Coraline*, which will be published sometime in 2002. A film version is currently in the works. "I'd sent it to my agent, who sent it to Henry Selick, who fell in love with it, and promptly bought the film rights for an awful lot of money



Terry Gilliam toyed with time travel in *12 MONKEYS* (above). Now, he's courting the apocalypse in *GOOD OMENS*.

Which meant that after everything went sort of wobbly for Henry after *MONKEYBONE* came out, [he] got to go off and do the film of *CORALINE*, which he's currently doing and is very happy about."

According to Gaiman, *CORALINE* is a story, "about a little girl who lives in a big old house that's been converted into apartments. And one day she goes through a door that normally opens onto a back wall — they'd bricked up that doorway. This time, it doesn't open onto a wall, it opens up onto a corridor. And she goes down it. She finds herself in an apartment just like the one she just left. And waiting for her in the kitchen are her Other Mother and her Other Father. And they look just like the ones she left behind only instead of eyes they have big black buttons. And they have long fingers that waggle. And they love her, and they want her to stay with them forever and always, and it's about what happens and how she escapes." Right up Selick's alley.

Another project on the horizon is a big-budget film version of Gaiman's novel *Neverwhere*, which tells the story about the land of "London Below," where people go when they find themselves homeless and ignored by their successful and affluent neighbors. The

rights to *Neverwhere* are owned by Henson Entertainment, but as of right now, there are a few small snags in bringing the project to the screen, due to the impending sale of the company by current owner E.M.T.V. & Merchandising AG. "The guys of Henson are just waiting to be sold," said Gaiman. "[But] they're definitely moving forward with *NEVERWHERE*. They've hired a director, they had him for a year, he did not work out, they fired him, they have a new director coming on board whom I can't name yet, because contracts haven't been signed. But he seems really cool, so we'll see. It's definitely still ongoing."

Gaiman's hopes for a big-screen *NEVERWHERE* stem from the fact that the book had been filmed once before, as an unsuccessful and entirely-routine miniseries by the BBC. "NEVERWHERE the TV series was no fun for me," Gaiman said. "It has some marvelous moments, but it was very strange. *Neverwhere* took about five years to write, and it was all built to work and come together sort of like a Swiss watch; it was constructed. And then to have somebody basically throw all that construction away, was really, really frustrating. I kept saying, 'Look, you know, I really wouldn't do it

that way.' And the response I kept getting back was, 'We're the BBC, we know exactly what we're doing.' And eight months later, when it was finally shown, people kept saying to me, 'Well, why are you doing that? Boy, that's a pretty stupid thing to do.' And I said, 'Yes, I told them that.' There was definitely a level where I didn't want to work on *Daath* and hand it over to somebody who would turn it into something schmaltzy or something... something else. I really wanted... I wanted to direct it simply to preserve the project. So it's much more about the integrity of the thing."

Gaiman will be helming the film version of his comic book miniseries, *Death: The High Cost of Living*. Death, for those unfamiliar with her, is a character that first appeared in the *Sandman* comic series. She's a small, thin, upbeat goth-chick who, according to *The High Cost of Living*, takes human form once every hundred years. It was one of the most popular stories of Gaiman's canon, and *Death* is one of his most popular characters. People were very excited about the news that Gaiman is not only adapting his story for the screen, but is slated to direct it as well. "Nobody has been cast yet," Gaiman said. "I had always assumed anyway that *Death* probably had an American agent, because she used the word 'ginchy' early on and I'd never heard anyone English use that word. The main thing about *Death* is keeping her young and female, as far as I'm concerned, I'd hate to be there if they say 'You know, we love the movie, everything's a go except Meryl Streep really wants to play *Death*.' I don't want to do that to the girl. That's what I've been saying about the *BOOKS OF MAGIC* movie [based on another of Gaiman's comic miniseries]. Because of Harry Potter, [Books of Magic lead character] Timothy Hunter can no longer be a bespectacled English 12 year old."

Special thanks to Jack Womack and Lorraine Garland for their assistance with this interview.

John Carpenter's

GHOSTS of mars

By Denise Dumars

There are no rat/spiders in JOHN CARPENTER'S GHOSTS OF MARS as there were in the 1950s science fiction extravaganza THE ANGRY RED PLANET. But Mars, the planet that continues to mystify the public, swallow or disable exploratory vehicles, and even stun us with the possibility of hidden life and frozen water (and with the fact that the planet's crust is actually butterscotch-colored, not rust-red), make it continuing fodder for spooky space movies.

Two rather unsuccessful science fiction films about Mars have been released in recent years. But as a John Carpenter film, GHOSTS OF MARS is less about science fiction than it is about horror, action, and the gritty realities of the last frontier.

Variously described as "a western on Mars," by Carpenter himself and "a war movie on Mars," by Producer Sandy King, one thing is clear, per Carpenter: "This is not a spacesuit movie."

For good reason. The Mars of the film is about eighty-five percent terraformed—which is to say that it has been engineered to be more earthlike and is well on its way to supporting human life. "Humans can breathe there with minimal help," said King, who noted that costumer Robin Bush came up with a trailer-full of leather, hop-sack, and other rough-and-tumble, warm-against-the-elements clothing that the new residents of Mars must wear against the bitter cold and driving winds of the planet.

Mars presents a low-tech type of future. Miners play their

trade, locomotives get people from one place to another, and old-fashioned shotguns work better in the gritty atmosphere than high-tech weaponry. Add these elements together, and you have a frontier town on another planet, where survival is goal #1.

A tough, matriarchal police force tries to keep the inevitable frontier rowdiness in line. Led by police chief Helena Braddock, played by Pam Grier, the cops on Mars, including British actor Jason Statham and actresses Natasha Henstridge and Clea DuVal, have captured a dangerous felon who is suspected of committing atrocities the likes of which have never before been seen, even on Mars.

"My character is a criminal, but he's not the murderer they think he is," said Ice Cube,

who plays the felon "Desolation" Williams. In fact, Williams is not, after all, responsible for the atrocities—a new and much more dangerous enemy is.

Enter the Martian warriors—the ghosts of the title. "Imagine a society that did not develop high technology, but did develop magical powers," said Carpenter. "And now imagine that they wanted to protect their planet."

As the Martians died out, they left, in effect, a curse: the ghosts of warriors lying in wait for the day when Mars is invaded and taken over by aliens—in other words, us. The ghosts emerge when an archeologist, played by Joanna Cassidy, accidentally unearths their presence. "My character is there to protect the integrity of any archeological or anthropological finds on Mars," Cassidy said. "She inadvertently releases the warriors on an unsuspecting frontier town."

To say that then all hell breaks loose would be putting it mildly.

REMOVING THE STING FROM POLICE BRUTALITY: Natasha Henstridge plays a frontier cop who finds herself battling an inexorable and indestructible force.



Greg Nicotero, whose KNB group created the look of the imposing Martian warriors, based in part on work by fantasy artist Brom, explained the nature of the Martian ghosts: "Once they take over your body, they use it, and if it gets killed, they move on to another body. Once they take you over, you're dead, you're gone." Once the ghost of a Martian warrior has possessed a human body, the warrior spirit then begins to transform the body to make it look as frightening as possible. The warriors mutilate themselves, decorating their bodies with strips of skin, piercing them with metal, filing their teeth to points.

The soul of the movie rests in the character development of Melanie Ballard and Desolation Williams, two characters whose life paths would ordinarily be diametrically opposed. Ballard, the police commander left in charge when her superior officer is killed, was originally supposed to be played by actress/rock star Courtney Love, who left the project under somewhat mysterious circumstances; everything from an injury to creative differences with the filmmaking team have been hinted at, but the rumor mill is still active on this one. Natasha Henstridge stepped in to fill the role, and then, as if the anarchic energy of Mars affected even the filmmaking, became ill during filming in Los Angeles, forcing the production to shut down for a time. Henstridge persevered, though, and managed to take the part and run with it.

While outdoor locations were filmed in New Mexico, an old power station in Eagle Rock, a city in the hills above Los Angeles, provided interiors. This art deco, Depression-era building became the setting for the jail in which Desolation Williams is held, and ultimately becomes the place where humans must face off against Martians. As in many fine films, setting is almost the equivalent of another character in *GHOSTS OF MARS*, and Carpenter's creative team went to extraordinary lengths to make both exterior and interior settings believable.

Production designer Bill Elliott had the challenge of actually creating a Martian landscape here on Earth. His team used a special, biodegradable red dye to transform an old gypsum mine in New Mexico into a Martian mining settlement. Creating a Martian frontier town is another of the impressive special effects feat that will make this film into a whole new take on life on Mars. "We built Mars in New Mexico," Elliott laughed, "at six thousand feet and one hundred degrees, and it rained every day. We started building a town like a bunch of maniacs! We had about seven weeks from the time we started pounding stakes until the time the film would be shot."

THE GOD OF WAR REVIVES: The inauspicious foothold of humanity on another world is shaken loose by the ghosts of Martian warriors. **RIGHT:** Ice Cube is "Desolation" Williams, hardened criminal who may be the colonists' only hope.

Echoes of Carpenter's former films seem to bleed into the red dust of Mars, and fans of his films will enjoy finding these motifs in *GHOSTS OF MARS*. Cops holed up against the warriors in a Martian jail is a motif that seems to echo the early John Carpenter film *ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13*. Creatures that can possess one body after another have some similarities to the title creature in Carpenter's *THE THING*. Thematically, the film fits in with Carpenter's trademark blend of horror and science fiction mixed with action and echoes of Westerns and war films.

Terraforming is still a new idea in films, though sci novelists have been writing about it for years. It's clear that Carpenter is more involved with story, with character interaction, and with providing an exciting and frightening film than he is with "geez-whizz" speculation on actual science.

And since films are meant to entertain, that's probably a good thing.

GIFQ



Once Upon a Time in the Future...

FINAL FANTASY

Will CG Adventure Find an Audience Beyond Seasoned Game-Players?

By Biff L. Peterson

On the outside, it looks like a typical morning at Hawaii Film Studios, a collection of small-to-medium-sized soundstages located at Diamond Head, on the outskirts of Honolulu. But today, inside one of these buildings, something revolutionary is taking place—something destined to take feature animation in entirely new directions, and take science fiction action-adventure movies into the future they've so often predicted.

A grid measuring eight square meters down by eight square meters across is delineated on the floor. In the middle of this grid stands an actor clad in a black jumpsuit that's covered from head-to-toe with what looks like thirty-seven ping-pong balls. Surrounding the grid on all sides are sixteen video cameras atop tall tripods, each one

precisely positioned to record the actor's movements from a slightly different angle. To do this, each camera is equipped with a rapidly blinking infrared light that shines on the ping-pong balls—which are really white, "retroreflective" markers—and bounces back to the camera lens. From there, the movements of a human body are fed into a computer hard drive and turned into a 3-D human stick-figure—the first step in an elaborate process to create an animated character.

It's early November, 2000, and this is the set of FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN, the much-hyped, much-anticipated, and much-expensive (unconfirmed rumors have put the budget at over \$100 million), all-CGI sf animation event that's sure to go down in history either as a technological marvel and cult

classic, or an over-inflated, under-thought vanity project (and first film) by director and video-game mogul Hironobu Sakaguchi.

Along with a handful of other genre publications, *Cinefantasy* was invited to Hawaii to take a look at the production by Square Pictures. During a whirlwind, one-day tour, we got a glimpse into the rapidly advancing technology behind the most ambitious attempt yet to create a "photorealistic" film world, consisting entirely of computer-generated characters and settings—technology that has brought "digital actors" closer to reality than ever before.

Motion capture isn't really a new process—it's been used to improve the movements of CGI characters increasingly in the past few years—but the mo-cap work on FINAL FANTASY is impressive for its sheer magnitude. Remington Scott, FINAL FANTASY's motion capture line producer, said the 16,000-square-foot studio is

the largest ever dedicated to motion-capture work. FINAL FANTASY includes more shots created with motion-capture than any previous film.

Like everyone working on FINAL FANTASY, Scott is aware of the "real versus synthetic" debate, but he brushes aside notions that the movie is setting a dangerous precedent.

"Things that are new sometimes are scary to people," Scott said. "This looks very real, and the conflict is that we're not looking at real human beings, and therefore we're replacing people. But the whole

HUMAN INFLUENCE: Scientist Aki and her companions represent the first attempt to synthesize believable human CG characters in a feature film.



process takes three times the number of performers to create one character, and that's more than any other animated film. So we're opening up new jobs for performers, and giving them a new opportunity to express themselves. The term that's being used is 'Artificially Created Actor.' These are digital characters, but the actors are human. A true 'synthespian' is probably a character created by a computer. And that is going to happen—probably not in the next 20 years, but we'll have computers that are intelligent enough to create more interesting life forms. But we're not doing that."

While the voice of heroine Aki Ross was provided by actress Ming-Na Wen, the character's physical stunts were performed by Tori Eldridge, a Broadway dancer and trained martial artist. Neither Wen nor Eldridge particularly look much like Aki—the physically streamlined, ethnically generic action heroine—but that's irrelevant, Scott explained: "We cast actors based on their performances. We're looking for the most talented people to work with. We're trying to create characters that have realistic human behavior. They are facing extreme psychological, emotional and physical obstacles. It's not about having someone here with mime skills, it's about having someone who's a very good actor. You'll see that with the motion-capture performance capability, every nuance and subtlety of the performance is captured. If somebody overacts, you see it, it stands out. We're trying to get the subtleties of human movement into the computer. That's the key of what we're doing here."

While some people in the effects biz have questioned the logic of creating digital actors that look like real humans, and asserted that the real purpose of CGI is to create creatures, spaceships, etc. that are otherwise impossible (*à la* JURASSIC PARK or THE PHANTOM MENACE). Producers Aida and Lee explained that the idea behind FINAL FANTASY is to create an entire virtual world where human beings, aliens, spaceships, and backgrounds all look equally realistic because they're cut from the same digital cloth.

"As expensive as this movie is, it would probably cost us three times as much if we tried to do it live-action, and it wouldn't look as good," said Lee, whose other credits include GODZILLA. "There is a reality to the creatures and the effects work in CGI that, quite frankly, is much more germane in this aesthetic environment than it is, say, if you look at something like THE HAUNTING, where there's a lot of CGI effects that just look cheesy because you don't buy it; it doesn't match into live-action. But in this movie it's a consistent aesthetic, and I think that's key. Once you enter the world, as jarring as it is initially, you basically accept it."

As everyone knows by now, the film isn't strictly based on any of the nine



FAR FROM FINAL FANTASY: Humans battle an alien menace and their own frailty in an original story that keys off of the video game's concepts.

FINAL FANTASY games, but instead is an "ultimate fantasy about life and death," as director Sakaguchi said. In post-apocalyptic New York in the year 2065, the lithe-bodied female scientist Aki is trying to unlock the secret of a race of ghost-like alien insects who have invaded Earth and killed off most of the human population. The story is propelled by Aki's nightmarish visions of huge man-versus-alien battles, and by a conflict within the military over how to eradicate the menace. The influence of modern Japanese anime is obvious, but the film's

look is something else altogether—something more akin to STARSHIP TROOPERS squared. This ain't no George Lucas movie.

Our guided tour also included an overview of the facilities at the Square Pictures "studio," which is actually an office building near Waikiki Beach, where animators sat hunched close to their monitors in dark cubicles within several floors' worth of darkly-lit offices. More than two hundred people hailing from twenty-two different countries were employed on the production.

The production line, at first glance, isn't

FINAL FANTASY

Producer Chris Lee

Making CG Drama to Stir the Masses

By Daniel M. Kimmel

I don't think Julia Roberts or Tom Hanks has anything to worry about," producer Chris Lee said while showcasing some advance footage from Columbia Pictures' July release. His model is not live action, but animation, noting that people were skeptical when Walt Disney announced the first full-length cartoon back in the 1930s. Then it was called, "Disney's folly." Now it's looked at as simply another way to tell a particular type of story.

When Lee was looking for computer games that might lend themselves to movie treatments, he was interested in *Tomb Raider* and *Final Fantasy*.

ting off hordes of alien invaders. Ross has to fight not only gigantic, soul-stealing monsters, but the human General Hein (voiced by James Wood) who has his own plan of attack.

"It's the first time a game has been adapted by the creator of the medium of the game," noted Lee. Rather than simply license the title and some characters for other people to turn into a movie, Sakaguchi was able to adapt his

eighteen months was devoted to software tests, to see if they could create the necessary effects. Aki's hair required special software designed just for that purpose. "We spent twenty

undertaking. Lee puts the budget in the \$100 million range, but notes that they will not have to reinvent the wheel for the next film. "Sets" created for the film can be altered or "relied" and

used again. Sakaguchi has already indicated he wants to use Aki in another film, not necessarily as the same character.

"We're trying to get our movies down in the \$50 million range, maybe less, who knows," Lee observed. "It's getting cheaper."

In a given shot, numerous elements are combined to create the scene, from the background to the foreground to the "special effects" work. There are as many as 430 images layered into a single shot in the film. To make it even more realistic, the filmmakers had to think how it would look if it was actually on film, and create effects that aren't naturally part of the computer animation process.

Although public reaction will play a large part in determining whether this experiment is successful, Lee sees the future of realistic computer animated films largely in the realm of science fiction and fantasy adventure, where fantastic environments and creatures can be more easily created. Due to the limitations of the animation, using it for a straightforward romantic comedy seems farfetched at this point.

Perhaps that day will never come, but having overseen the process from conception to execution, Lee thinks this is a new way of storytelling that's here to stay. "When I think of where we can be five years from now, it's either very exciting or very scary."



percent of our production time just on her hair," said Lee.

The characters were all freshly designed, and not based on the actors who would play them. Perhaps the most interesting-looking character is Aki's mentor, Dr. Sid (voiced

by Donald Sutherland), who is an old man with wrinkles and liver spots. Said Lee, "He looks the best, because he's the last character we animated, so we learned a lot." Indeed, they learned so much that the animators had to go back and redo some of their early footage because they were able to improve the original effects.

Since this is the first feature from Square Pictures, as well as the first to attempt this level of realism, it was an expensive

TECH WITH SOUL: The daunting challenge of FINAL FANTASY: making the audience care for actors who don't really exist. ABOVE: Producer Chris Lee.

Someone else purchased the rights to *Tomb Raider*, which is being released as a live action film with Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft. Lee succeeded in acquiring *Final Fantasy*.

"It's an interesting series because each game changes," explained Lee. "The movie is the first one set on Earth."

The story involves Dr. Aki Ross (voiced by Ming-Na, who also did Disney's *Mulan*), who is part of a team of humans on a post-apocalyptic Earth but

digital work to a different medium. However, filmmakers expecting something indistinguishable from a live-action film should realize that that was not their intent.

"We didn't set out to do photorealistic people, because you can't," said Lee. The goal was to focus on realism as opposed to cartoonish-looking characters, but not to pretend that this wasn't animation. The first

all that different than any other SFX movie. It starts with fourteen storyboard artists, culled from Hollywood and Japanese animation, who draw each shot of the film; these shots are then assembled in order, and after some rewriting and adjusting, turned over to the layout department to create the simple 3-D master models that get the digital animation process under way.

Tani Kunitake, the film's staging director (whose credits include working as a concept illustrator on *FIGHT CLUB* and *THE MATRIX*), said the objective was to eliminate continuity errors: "When you move to this level of animation, things that are usually forgiven, aren't. You're getting blasted with so much information, in a new medium, that you've got to have complete visual continuity from frame to frame, or you risk losing the audience."

Once the movements of the real-life "body motion" actors were recorded using the motion-capture process, the data was enhanced with amazing detail. Animators spent months giving Aki and the other cast members life-like skin, realistic hair, textured clothing, and fine movements like blinking, swallowing, flaring nostrils and hand movements. When animating the characters' lip movements, the animators utilized a labor-intensive process, watching videotapes of the voice-recording sessions, so the digital actors' mouths moved like those of Alec Baldwin, Ving Rhames, James Woods, etc.

Sequences involving the phantom-like alien creatures, flying vehicles and other props, and even certain actions of the "synthespians" were created using traditional, time-consuming, keyframe computer animation. Shots then went through the various stages of production—lighting, visual effects (smoke, explosions, dust, etc.). To make the movie look "movie-like," rather than just a feature-length computer graphic, the animators went so far as to simulate film imperfections, like grainy stock. After the animators' work was done, the data (contained in huge, digital files, measured in terabytes) was sent to Square's rendering farm, massive rooms containing 960 CPUs stacked row after row. An awesome display of computer power, but necessary—one frame of film contains so much data, it can take twenty minutes to save.

Director Sakaguchi, who has been with Square since 1986 and has been the company's chairman and CEO for the past year, explained that the idea for a *FINAL FANTASY* movie originated with innovations in the video game: "It couldn't have been a

live-action movie, because the initial motivation behind going full-CG and doing this movie was that, during the production of [the video game] *FINAL FANTASY VII*, I wanted to produce top-of-the



MASTER OF THE GAME. LEFT: Squaresoft mogul Hironobu Sakaguchi expands his influence as director of *FINAL FANTASY VII*. TOP: Actors perform a motion-cap sequence.

line, never before seen movie-quality graphics. In order to do that, we had all these

technical hurdles in developing the game that had to be overcome. So in that sense, that goal to become the cutting-edge technology production company came first. The movie was an outgrowth of that."

"I needed cutting edge computer graphic artists," Sakaguchi said. "Back in Japan, I knew a lot of great digital artists who were making commercials, but couldn't fully utilize their knowledge and skills. And in Los Angeles, when I was out there working on game titles like *Parasite Eve*, I had a chance to work with the Hollywood digital artists. I realized that by putting these two talents together, it would be a great beginning in trying to overcome these technological hurdles. Building the studio in Honolulu was the best way to bring them all together."

"There are certainly influences from Japanese animation, music videos, and also movies like *THE MATRIX*. Those are visual influences. As far as the story goes, I don't believe there's any particular area that I borrowed or was influenced from. The story is quite original and very out-there. There was even a point where the people in Hollywood thought it was way too out-there for the teen audience."

One important question dogging *FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN*, as well as another summer movie, *ATLANTIS*, is whether anyone beyond the hardcore gaming audience will go see this film. Producer Aida isn't worried. "Our main target audience is males 13 to 25, and

then our secondary audiences will be females in college and high school," he said. "I think we can appeal to a wider range of audience, especially the female audience, who may not particularly be interested in science fiction action-adventure movies, but this is a very unique movie and a unique protagonist.... We don't really compare our movie to *TITAN A.E.* We look to pictures like *THE MATRIX*, because the story is a very rich story." And because they're much more successful, no doubt.

As to casting, Aida noted that several of the voice actors involved had never done animation or even voice-over work before. "We watched a lot of movies and listened to the voices. We knew in some cases who we wanted. For example, from early on, we were hoping that one character would be Steve Buscemi. And we told Al Reinert, who was writing the script, that this would be Steve Buscemi, even before we had talked to his agent. It's very interesting how Steve Buscemi, Donald Sutherland, and Ving Rhames all had never done animation or voice-overs before. Then you have James Woods and Alec Baldwin, veterans who have done many voice recordings."

Will Aki save the Earth? Will *FINAL FANTASY* make the successful jump from video-games to movies, or will it suffer the ignominy of something like *SUPER MARIO BROS.*? Only time will tell, but the filmmakers are confident that this could become a major film franchise, with each film eclipsing the previous ones technologically.

"You have to replace the interactive nature of the role-playing game with the demands of the motion picture medium," said producer Lee. "And therefore you couldn't tell the same kind of story exactly, that he tells in the game, and which has proven to be very successful. What is consistent in both the game and the motion picture is the spiritual sensibility that he brings to it. All great science fiction has a mythological underpinning to it; when you don't have that spiritual sensibility, then you just have a lot of battles and things like that, and it's not that interesting."

*He's More Than
Your Average,
Cold-Blooded Killer*



He's

SPACEMAN

By Paula Vitaris

There is no try, there is only do," Yoda tells Luke in *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. He might have been talking to writer and director Scott Dikkers, a *STAR WARS* fan whose lifelong desire to make movies was sidetracked for a while by cartooning and writing, most notably for the satirical news website *The Onion*. But in the mid-'90s, Dikkers realized the time had come to fulfill his life's ambition and make a movie—so he did.

That movie is *SPACEMAN*, a \$50,000 science fiction satire about a human boy abducted by aliens and stranded, as an adult, back on the Earth he remembers only in puzzling flashes of memory. *SPACEMAN* screened at the 1997 Austin Film Festival, where it won the Audience Award for Best Feature, and in Chicago and New York, where it earned positive reviews. Now genre fans everywhere can enjoy *SPACE-*

MAN thanks to Palm Pictures, which released it on VHS and DVD this past April. *SPACEMAN* will also air on the Sci Fi Channel sometime this summer.

For as long as he can remember, Dikkers wanted to make movies. As a boy, he borrowed an 8mm camera from a neighbor and made short films. He briefly attended the University of Southern California film school, but decided it wasn't right for him, and turned his attention to cartooning and writing, which led to a job with *The Onion*. His work there was so popular he became a co-owner and even something of a celebrity, even appearing on *LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN*. He also wrote and produced a television sketch comedy pilot, *THE COMEDY CASTAWAYS*.

But, deep down, Dikkers still longed to make a movie, particularly a movie much like those of his cinematic heroes: filmmakers such as George Lucas, Steven Spielberg,

James Cameron, and George Miller. "There was this golden age of Hollywood schlock, late '70s or early '80s, that I was weaned on," Dikkers explained. "That was when I was in my most formative years. *STAR WARS*, *JAWS*, *E.T.*, *THE ROAD WARRIOR*, *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*, *SUPERMAN*, *TERMINATOR*. They just don't make movies that are that fun anymore. Movies now are either dark and disturbing or they're totally contrived by development executives to appeal to a certain market."

Not surprisingly, the major obstacle to making a movie was lack of funding. Then Dikkers saw Robert Rodriguez's low-budget hit *EL MARIACHI*. Money or no money, Dikkers was now determined to make his movie.

He began writing the script for *SPACEMAN* in May 1995, began pre-production within a couple of months, and then started principal photography in September, shooting on Super16 film stock.

"Here's where we start to see just how insane I was!" he laughed. Dikkers put his own savings into the project, and raised money from friends and anyone else willing to donate to the cause.

Dikkers's hero, known only as Spaceman (played by David Ghilardi), has been trained by his alien masters as a ceremonial combatant and killer, his brain altered to accept orders unquestioningly and to promote aggression. "He has no application for that training whatsoever in this world," Dikkers noted. "David Ghilardi, who played Spaceman, did such a beautiful job of bringing all that out, and playing it straight, yet making it funny. That's really hard to do."

Spaceman reveals to his Earth boss (Jay Rath) that he crash-landed on Earth after escaping a mutiny he did not support. Now he must make his way without any "command structure" to guide him. People look at him strangely — in his uniform with the pinned shoulders and howl-shaped cap, he looks like a refugee from a 1950s sci-fi flick — and they are annoyed or frightened by his ultra-formal, militaristic stance and speech patterns. All this is played mostly in dry comic style, with Spaceman's inhumanly

efficient demeanor unnerving those around him, especially his hapless boss. An FBI agent (Brian Stack) and some local gangsters are in search of Spaceman with thoughts of bodily harm. However, a pretty neighbor named Sue (Deborah King, who resembles a young Carol Kane) takes to him after he applies himself, in his usual thorough manner, to cleaning her apartment.

"I thought it would be kind of funny and

also runs a barber shop, where there are no customers, but plenty of goons hanging around. When Spaceman tags along on a hit to prove his mettle, but cannot kill the target, Mr. Lieb sends out a whole variety of baddies to finish him off. Meanwhile, the FBI Special Agent, who thinks that Spaceman may be an alien, wants to catch—and dissect—him. Spaceman soon demonstrates that when he has to defend himself, even kill, he is an expert.

"The best fish-out-of-water stories are the ones where the guy is alienated from everyone else around him, and he can't get along because he's from a totally different world," Dikkers commented. "The only way to turn up the heat on that is have people actually trying to kill him. And the more varied the people trying to kill him, the better. I like a movie that has several bad guys. You don't know who the real bad guy is. One of my favorite things in the movie is when the head FBI



CROUCHING ALIEN, HIDDEN BUDGET: Shoestring financing didn't prevent *SPACEMAN* creator Scott Dikkers (standing, left) from making aura Hong Kong action fans did not walk away disappointed.

interesting to have a guy in a spacesuit who thinks he's from outer space interacting with real people on Earth," Dikkers said. "That's how it started, and as I wrote it, I realized it would be more interesting if he actually was from outer space, and then more interesting still if he had been reprogrammed by aliens to be this ceremonial killer. So it became this exaggerated fish-out-of-water story. I can relate to that. I think that for anybody who ever felt alienated, those are powerful feelings, and I was channeling all of my own angst into that."

Although *SPACEMAN* is primarily a very dry satire, at times it has some fairly serious scenes, particularly when Spaceman is trying to contact his alien masters. His sense of isolation is palpable as he receives no response. Said Dikkers, "One of the things I like in movies is when a character or a movie or a situation can be hilarious, and then suddenly it turns on you and you realize there's something more emotionally weighty going on at the same time."

Spaceman tries to put his training to work, first with the FBI, and then with an elderly crime lord named Mr. Lieb, who

agent, who's been on his trail the whole time, finally meets up with him, and Spaceman snaps his neck like it's nothing. It always bothered me in movies like those big Jean-Claude Van Damme movies. There's this big evil developer who is the main bad guy and who sends all these expertly trained hit men after Van Damme. It's really difficult to feel these people are trained killers, because Van Damme kills all of them. Then he finally gets to the top guy, who has no fighting training of any kind, yet he's the hardest person to kill. It just doesn't make any sense. So I thought it would be funny if we just snapped the FBI guy's neck. The real battle Spaceman is fighting is with his own self; his human side is fighting with his alien side, so all these other characters are just window dressing."

Cinematographer Chris Chan Lee — who is the writer and director of an independent film, *YELLOW* — knew Dikkers from USC. "Chris shot a beautiful movie, but sadly, because of our budget, we couldn't get each shot color-timed properly," Dikkers lamented. "When we started shooting, I told him, 'Chris, if it's in focus, I'll be delighted.' He had ideas, and I pretty much let him run with it. I storyboarded the



movie, so I had ideas about what shots I wanted, but when we got to the locations, many times it was the first time we'd been there, so the storyboards went out the window and we made stuff up from scratch. Chris wanted to color-code the various characters, which I liked. We wanted this washed-out, yellowish-tone nostalgic look for Spaceman's memories. The FBI guys had blue. Other than that we just wanted it to look as comic-booky as possible and to have creative filming as much as we could within our budget."

Exteriors were shot mostly in Chicago, and interiors in Madison, Wisconsin. Lack of money forced Dikkers to suspend shooting with only half the movie finished. He took clips from his completed footage and edited them into a trailer, which he used to raise the rest of the funds necessary. SPACEMAN producer Michael J. Hirsch, also a former writer for *The Onion*, obtained funding from "some slightly loofier connections, and was able to get people that I didn't have access to," Dikkers said. SPACEMAN finally finished shooting in April 1996 and post-production was completed during that summer.

Spaceman was played by Chicago area actor David Ghilardi, whom Dikkers had admired as Puck in a local production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "We brought him in and he just blew everybody away. Nobody else really got it, except him. I was getting scared before we found David, because Spaceman is the main character, and if we couldn't get an actor, we were in trouble. I never even thought to go to a casting agency and get a name actor. I'm sure we could have done it, and it would have helped us raise money, but I just wasn't thinking big. I guess, David was so funny. He was good at improvising, he just understood the role, and totally knew what needed to be done. It would have been a terrible movie with a bad actor in that part. David was able to be totally intense and straight and yet be amusing at that. Not a lot of people can do that. It's really difficult, and often the things I produce tend to require that. Leslie Nielsen was great at doing serious and then being funny at it. Some people can't. They're either winking or smirking at you, they know it's funny, or they just don't have a humorous bone in their body, and when they're serious, they're serious."

Dikkers wrote the part of Spaceman's employer, a supermarket manager, for his friend, actor and writer Jay Rath. Another friend, Buzz Kemper, plays a therapist who interviews Spaceman. A part-time actor, Kemper's principal occupation is recording engineer (he is chief recordist of the Milwaukee Symphony) and he filled a second role in SPACEMAN as recordist for the film score. Casting agent Julie Cohen, who has a small role in the film as a STAR

TREK fan, brought David Ghilardi and Deborah King to Dikkers' attention. Second City veteran Brian Stack, who plays the FBI Special Agent in Charge, is also a friend of Dikkers and appeared in THE COMEDY CAST-AWAYS. (Stack has written for and acted on LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN.) The elderly crime boss,

played by Richard Somers, was cast through unconventional means. "I saw Richard on the street one day. He was a homeless guy and he had a great look," Dikkers said. "I asked him if he'd ever done any acting before, and he said, 'Well, not really, well, maybe... well, I think I did some stuff in high school.' I brought him in

for an audition and he was pretty good. I put him up for a couple of months in a place in exchange for his agreeing to work in the movie, and that worked out pretty well."

Unlike many low-budget films, SPACEMAN's score, by Edward Pearsall, is arranged for a full orchestra—the most expensive line item in the SPACEMAN budget. "I really wanted SPACEMAN to seem like a big budget movie," Dikkers said. "Big budget movies have big sweeping orchestral scores, and cheap little low-budget movies have chintzy synthesizer scores. I just didn't want that. Ed happened to be dating my mom at the time and was getting his Ph.D. in music theory at the University of Wisconsin. I went

to listen to the university orchestra play a piece that he had written, and I was totally blown away by it. It was a great piece, sort of Jerry Goldsmith-sounding. PLANET OF THE APES sort of music, really action-packed. I said, 'Ed, you've got to do the music for my movie.' He was really excited to do it. He's a total brainiac, academician music guy. He knows all about advanced music theory, so to him this is like, 'Oh yeah, I can whip out some schlock for you, no problem.' And it's a really great score."

SPACEMAN was in the can, but Dikkers and Hirsch didn't have the \$40,000 it would



FOX MULDER, WE HARDLY KNEW YE: Kidnapped by aliens in childhood, SPACEMAN returns to Earth a highly-treined, single-minded, deadly stockboy.

cost to edit the negative and strike a film print. Instead, they made a print from their video master, which Dikkers admits is not the optimum way to present their movie. "SPACEMAN actually is a very beautifully shot, crystal-clear movie," he said. "The next one is going to look like a million bucks, because now we know how to spend the money...For SPACEMAN, it was kind of a mad dash just to do the

movie."

Even without a print from the negative, Dikkers and Hirsch began shopping SPACEMAN around to film festivals, without much luck. "It was so difficult because nobody has seen anything like this," Hirsch said. One venue that did not reject SPACEMAN was the 1997 Austin Film Festival, where it became the hit of that year's selections and won the Audience Award for Best Feature Film. Unfortunately, the film still did not get picked up for theatrical distribution, so Dikkers and Hirsch opened it themselves for what was supposed to be a week's run in a Chicago art house theater. A week became a month: SPACEMAN sold out every weekend, and would have run longer if the theater hadn't already had other films booked.

Dikkers and Hirsch are now preparing for a fall shoot on their second film, E-DAY!, which Dikkers co-wrote with Jay Rath. "It's a big action-comedy-war spoof, about Eskimos invading the United States," said Hirsch. Dikkers added, "It's a parody of the big war/disaster movies of the '50s and '60s. Again, it's going to have that big-budget feel, and I think this time it's going to have the look, too, but it's not actually going to have a big budget."



HEIL TINKLES!

FX Superstars Fashion a War Between CATS & DOGS

By Mitch Persons

Everyone knows that dogs and cats traditionally do not get along. But suppose, just suppose, that these same animals were suddenly endowed with human voices and feelings. Would it then be possible to see that the furry, familiar, domesticated creatures are capable of literally waging a carefully planned psychological and physical war against each other?

That is the idea behind Warner

Bros./Village Roadshow's new, one-third live-action, one-third CGI, and one-third animatronic enterprise, *CATS & DOGS*. The film, written by John Requa and Glenn Ficarra, produced by Andrew Lazar, Chris De Faria, Warren Zide, and Craig Perry, and directed by Larry Guterma, stars Jeff Goldblum, Elizabeth Perkins, and Miriam Margolyes. Alec Baldwin, Susan Sarandon, and Joe Pantoliano supply the voices of some of the cats and dogs.

THE FUR FLIES: When cete' ambitions get too big for the litter box, it takes the combined power of Rhythm and Hues, the Tippett Company, and the Henson Creature Shop to orchestrate a canine response.

CATS & DOGS takes into account the never-ending struggle between the families *Felidae*

and *Canidae*, and goes one step further. The cats of the world plan to destroy the development of a vaccine that, once out on the open market, would virtually eliminate all human allergies to dogs. The dogs of the world strike back by attempting to thwart that plan.

Initially, the thought of filming this comedic action-adventure proved to be a bit of a stumper for director Guterma and producer De Faria. Anthropomorphic animals were nothing new in film, as exemplified by *BABE* and *STUART LITTLE*. Requa and Ficarra's script dealt with animals who behaved just as animals would behave (as they did so beautifully in *BABE*), but the story also required the creatures to do things like engage in

martial arts combat, perform spectacular, non-quadruped-type leaps, and fly airplanes.

"Because of the complexity of the effects," said De Faria, "Larry [Guterma] and I made a decision early on to create characters that existed in multiple mediums. We wanted to introduce live animals in a natural setting and then, through the use of puppets and computer animation, take our audience along an escalating path of credibility until, by the time they see a dog leaping off a two-story building onto a log-loader driven by a cat, they're okay with it."

To do this, De Faria and his co-producers lined up some of the greatest special effects companies in the film industry: Jim Henson's Creature Shop, Rhythm & Hues (which had just finished production on *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS*), Tippett Studio (*THE HOLLOW MAN*), and directors Ridley and Tony Scott's London-based Mill Film. Eventually, over 200 designers, animators, sculptors, technicians, and composers contributed to the technology of *CATS & DOGS*.

"Every effect must have a starting point," continued De Faria, "and for us that was the actual scanning of the images of the animal actors. The images were placed onto a computer where facial characteristics and body dimensions could be stored for use at a later time. Now, usually, CGI models of an animal's face are derived from the actual geometry of that face being scanned and then a catalogue of expressions are built using the animal's own physiology. We found that wouldn't work for us because animals don't have the kinds of facial expressions we needed for our film. Animals don't react with the level of surprise, aggression, humor, or malevolence that our animals needed to show. So we had to build models that were a kind of evolved version of the animal's physiology — one step beyond. That had never been done before; it was a technique created specifically for *CATS & DOGS*."

"Once that was accomplished, we tuned



to the Henson Creature Shop, which took different CGI images of skeletal structure and created what I like to call "computer puppets" which would move realistically with the same weight and flexibility as their live counterparts. Essentially, the same challenge existed with gross body movement that existed for facial animation. They had to literally rebuild the animals so that they were capable of doing the sometimes impossible-seeming things we wanted them to do."

breakdown. For CATS & DOGS, we made some of the smallest mechanisms we have ever created, with a lot of attention to detail.

"Each animal's eyes and teeth had to be carefully matched. When you cut between a puppet and a live ani-



ties as the real thing."

"It's enormously complicated," continued De Faria. "STUART LITTLE had digitally-created fur, but that effect, as impressive as it was, is already outdated. It's all a matter of textures, movement, lighting and reflexivity, plus how the oils work on the animal. Call it fur dynamics:

PLUFFY GETS ROUGH: The trick for the animal trainers, animatronics wranglers, and CG artists of CATS & DOGS was getting their varied disciplines to consistently render the film's four-legged stars

Scott Turner, a special effects supervisor at Tippett Studio, backs De Faria up. "Having a model is beneficial to animators," he said. "It enables them to see how much screen space the character actually fills, so they can better compose the shots. Plus, we can play with it, push it into a shape, and examine it from all angles until we think the balance and the pose is right and the center of gravity is correct. Ultimately, the model is hacked up into pieces and scanned, and then re-assembled in the computer."

"The last step in our effects process," continued De Faria, "was making puppet doubles. Now, we knew these puppets couldn't be like any puppets that had been built before, if they were going to be capable of the kind of nuance, action and performance we had in mind, so we pressed the Henson people to look into new materials and techniques. And they did deliver extraordinary puppets."

Said David Barrington Holt, creative supervisor of the Creature Shop, "Cats, by their nature, are one of the hardest creatures from which to make convincing puppets. Due to the small size of heads and bodies into which must be placed puppeteers' hands or complex mechanisms, much of what we build is like watchmakers' work, with a consequent delicacy and risk of

mal it's essential that detail differences don't jump out at you.

"One illusion which presented a bit of a problem was reproducing animal fur. That is one of the most difficult items to simulate realistically, whether on puppets or on the computer. Real fur is undeniably alive. Its quality is accentuated by the suppleness and flexibility of the skin it grows from. We spent a lot of time researching materials that would allow convincing matches for the fur of each animal, and threw away many things that were less than satisfying before we found what we were looking for."

Reproducing fur presented the same conundrum to computer expert Bill Westenhofer, the visual effects supervisor at Rhythm & Hues. "There is a character," Westenhofer explained, "called Mr. Tinkle, and he is a Persian cat. He was particularly challenging because of his long fur. The fur actually creates the form of the cat. It has to behave as a cohesive unit that can maintain a certain structure, yet yield and move as hair would when something brushes through it. When a cat leans against something, leaps through the air or even just moves a leg, its fur compresses and bends in a complex way. Finally, the hair has to be rendered with all the glints, transparent edge lighting and self-shadowing capabili-

How
does
the

computer interpret that? Essentially, it is a series of mathematical computations that has to make 20,000 hairs move in unison, yet move individually."

"What this all boils down to, really, is the difficulty [in] reproducing an animal that is familiar to every person on Earth. No one really knows how a dinosaur moved, but everyone knows what a cat or dog lunks like when it walks into a room. I think we have managed beyond anybody's expectations. At one point, a little beagle pup saunters into a scene. First he is a live animal, then animatronic, and then, when he talks, it is through his cyber-double. When he walks out of the frame, he is back to a live animal. The action is so fluid, it's virtually impossible to tell where the conversions are made."

"In a scene like that, what you are seeing is not a CGI effect, or a puppet, or a performing animal — what you are seeing is a dog, pure and simple."

Said Westenhofer, "The biggest challenge of CATS & DOGS was to create photorealistic animals that would be able to cut side by side with the real thing. I do believe that nothing like that has been done to the degree to which it is done in this film." *—CPG*

Ivan Reitman Fights...

EVOLUTION

The Director of One of the Eighties' Biggest Hits Looks to Recreate Genre Magic in the Arizona Desert

By Scott Tracy Griffin

Director Ivan Reitman finds the inevitable comparisons of his new film, *EVOLUTION*, to his earlier smash hit *GHOSTBUSTERS* a mixed blessing. "Who said that?" he bristled in mock offense when asked about the purported similarity, before conceding, "I like combination-of-genre movies. I've had great success with the science fiction films that I've made, and I love making comedies. This is a combination film."

"The tone is different (from *GHOSTBUSTERS*)," he continued, speaking to reporters who toured the film's set during principal photography in January, 2001. "*EVOLUTION* has, probably, a bigger

scale than *GHOSTBUSTERS* in terms of what happens, and that's maybe why it was described as similar. But it's a different film, and the science is quite different."

Internet reviews compared the first, more serious draft of Don Jakoby's script to *ANDROMEDA STRAIN* and *ALIENS*. Though the plausibly presented science remains, the story has been leavened with humor by rewrite team David Diamond and David Weissman.

David Duchovny gets to exercise his latent comedic chops as Ira Kane, a brilliant but dispossessed scientist who is slumming as a junior college professor. "I met David when I produced the movie *BEETHOVEN*, and he had a small role

in it," said Reitman. "He was very funny, and I thought, *Here's this really good-looking, extraordinarily smart guy, and it's strange that what he has become famous for is X-FILES*. He's fabulous in it, but he's not that dour a character; he's much more humorous in real life. I always had him in the back of my mind for a great opportunity to use him as a leading man who could do comedy. There are very few good-looking guys who can also do funny. He was my first choice, and he's doing great. I think he's contributed a lot to the humor of the film."

Orlando Jones stars as Duchovny's best friend, Harry Block; fleshing out the alien-

busting team with a name familiar with the young male demographic is Seann William Scott (*AMERICAN PIE*). Reitman offered the role of Wayne Green, a dim but

earnest aspiring fireman, to the young actor based on his performance in *ROAD TRIP*, which Reitman produced.

Distaff appeal is provided by Academy-Award nominee Julianne Moore (*BOOGIE NIGHTS*, *HANNIBAL*), who portrays Ira's love interest Allison Reed, a bureaucratic, Centers for Disease Control physician whose attraction to the maverick scientist sways her into his camp.

The film's story is set in motion when a meteor crashes into a desert cavern, jump-starting its own ecosystem and achieving 200 million years of evolution in about a month. Fortunately, the increasingly complex, aggressively evolving creatures within the sealed cave cannot survive in Earth's oxygen... until one of the creatures evolves

THE LITTLE FIREMAN WHO COULDN'T: In the official role of *EVOLUTION*'s Ernie Hudson, Seann William Scott plays a local boy who eventually makes good combating an alien menace.

air-breathing capability. Then it's time for Duchovny's crew to go to work and save the world.

California State University Fullerton doubled as academic backwater Glen Canyon Community College. Next, location work transformed Page, Arizona into an undetermined Arizona town "larger than Page, but smaller than Prescott," according to unit publicist Peter Silberman.

Interiors for the command center and cavern were filmed in Southern California. A looming, shuttered Boeing aircraft plant in the Los Angeles suburb of Downey was home to the full-sized, inflated canvas command center dome, which included airlock doors, laboratories, mess hall, infirmary, and other authentic touches constructed around the meteor impact site. The floor of the sound stage was covered with sand imported from the Arizona location to provide an exact match.

Two separate cavern sets were constructed at Raleigh Studios in Manhattan Beach. Each contained a different array of fauna, portraying different phases of the evolving ecosystem, which advanced from single-celled protists, to multi-celled animals, flatworms, evolutionary dead ends like walking logs and carnivorous trees, birds, and finally, primates. Production designer J. Michael Riva (*SIX DAYS, SEVEN NIGHTS*) looked to the concepts of artists like Zdzislaw Bekinski, H.R. Giger, and Wayne Barlow for creature inspiration, striving to craft a diversity of entities that seemed organic.

Reitman began collaborating with Phil Tippett (*JURASSIC PARK*) on the CGI creature design several months

before principal photography began. As a result of their early planning, "We started turning over early sequences two weeks into the shoot," the director said, a deliberateness that allowed them to slash their post-production

schedule and turn the film around in time for summer release.

"[Tippett's] a really wonderful, creative director, particularly with regard to the creatures," Reitman exulted of the famed



DESERT HEAT, TOP: David Duchovny, Orlando Jones, and Julianne Moore face down impending extermination in the Arizona desert. **LEFT:** Ivan Reitman on location. **BELOW:** A Phil Tippett-animated mutation becomes oxygen-tolerant. Humanity's first whiff of extinction.

animator. "He has a true sense of how they should move, and how to give them weight and personality. Characterizing some of these creatures is where the real fun comes. They're dangerous, but they contribute to the comedic element. All animals have personalities, whether you're dealing with dogs or cats or tigers. I've paid a lot of attention to that."

"We've got a little rubber," the director laughed when asked about the film's special effects, "but I'd say they're about eighty-five percent computer-generated. As the worldwide audience gets more sophisticated about what they expect to see, it's harder and harder to get away with rubber effects, unless they're a recreation of, say, an ape, the way Tim Burton has done [on the



PLANET OF THE APES remake]. I think that works fine, but in terms of creating new [creatures], it's tough."

EVOLUTION is produced by Reitman and Tom Pollock's Montecito Picture Company for DreamWorks. The project was reportedly one of the most difficult shoots in his company's career, due to the magnitude and scope of the sets and production design, the sheer number of CGI shots needed, and unexpected contingencies like a fire on the set.

The fire erupted at Raleigh Studios when a series of 15-foot-diameter fireballs ignited an artificial tree. Duchovny and Moore were quickly evacuated, along with crew and cast, including a number of gorilla-suited extras. Firefighters on standby managed to contain the fire in quick order, while Duchovny and Moore cooled their heels on the *ALLY MCBEAL* set next door.

With *EVOLUTION*, Reitman will seek to recapture *GHOSTBUSTERS'* potent boxoffice success and the widespread pop-culture appeal that eluded his more recent directorial efforts, like *FATHER'S DAY* and *SIX DAYS, SEVEN NIGHTS*.

Though Reitman and company aren't thrilled with the claims by Internet wags that the script is reminiscent of a watered-down *GHOSTBUSTERS*, they will undoubtedly be pleased if the film achieves the box office success of his previous genre effort.

CPQ



EVOLUTION

David Duchovny

Playing Alien Invasion for Yoks in the Arizona Desert

By Paula Vitaris

Evolution is magical but devoid of heroes," observed poet Stephen Dunn. "Perhaps evolution has no heroes, but *EVOLUTION*, the newest comedy from director Ivan Reitman, does — and thank goodness, because evolution in *EVOLUTION* goes way beyond magical.

The craziness begins when a meteor smashes into the Arizona desert and alien microorganisms swiftly evolve into all sorts of very big, very nasty monsters. Fortunately, David Duchovny, Orlando Jones, Seann William Scott, and Julianne Moore are on hand to save the day in this big science-fiction comedy released by Dreamworks and Columbia Pictures on June 8.

X-FILES fans may wonder why the show's former star, David Duchovny, chose a science fiction project for his next movie after so many years chasing aliens on the Fox series. Duchovny pointed out that *EVOLUTION* is completely unlike *THE X-FILES*. "What makes a film different from another is not what it's about, but what the tone is," he said. "Even though *EVOLUTION* is a science fiction film, it's a comedy and doesn't take itself seriously. It's a romp, and the tone and style couldn't

be further from what I've been doing the last few years in *THE X-FILES*, which takes its aliens, and itself, very seriously. The similarities of subject matter for me are superficial, but I can see that somebody on the outside looking in wouldn't think so."

EVOLUTION was originally written as a dark alien invasion story, but eventually it shifted into comic mode, with Ivan Reitman (*STRIPES*, *GHOSTBUSTERS*, *TWINS*) signing on as director. The story bears a superficial resemblance to *GHOSTBUSTERS* in that a team of unlikely heroes faces off against a horde of menacing creatures, but unlike the *GHOSTBUSTERS* gang, the characters in *EVOLUTION* are thrown together more by chance than design, and they long for peer approval more than financial gain.

Duchovny never read the serious version of the script and didn't even know it existed until Reitman mentioned it to him in the middle of filming. It was *EVOLUTION*'s comedic possibilities and the opportunity to work with Reitman that convinced the actor that this should be his next project. "I wanted to do a comedy in

the style that Ivan created with *GHOSTBUSTERS*," he said. "I haven't seen *GHOSTBUSTERS* recently, but I loved it when it came out. Ivan pretty much created the genre of science-fiction comedy with that movie. I like the performances he gets out of his actors; it's very different from what I do, and I thought it would be a challenge and it would be interesting for me to try to do that."

Duchovny plays biologist Dr. Ira Kane, formerly a top researcher for the Army whose career crashed, meteor-fashion, after an anthrax vaccine experiment went awry and spectacularly sickened his human test subjects. The script describes Ira as "always... the smartest guy in the room, but a big bump in life's road has encouraged a heightened sense of irony and cynicism." That sense of irony gets a major league workout in Ira's new job teaching irony-challenged students at sleepy Glen Canyon Community College in Arizona. His romantic life is just as lackluster as his professional life, and he has reached a point where he

doesn't take much of anything seriously—until his discovery of the alien microorganisms reenergizes him with the thought of once again be-

GUNS IN THE SUN: Duchovny becomes the nucleus of *EVOLUTION*'s Alienbusters, battling Tippi Company nasties for the fate of the Earth.

coming Big Man on Campus in the world of science.

"Ira is a loveable loser kind of a guy," said Duchovny. His approach to playing the character was to "base it in reality and move up from there—or in some scenes base it in whatever I think is funny, and try to bring it down into reality. It's hard, because my character in this movie will go from being one of the smartest guys in the world to one of the dumbest. The important thing to watch is the tone from scene to scene. You have to draw the line and make sure he's the same guy somehow. That's the real challenge in a movie like this, because the character is going to do goofy things, but he's also got to anchor the movie and be the center of it. The audience is taking the journey with him, so you don't want a



complete goofball at the wheel."

Ira comes off as the straight man compared to the other off-the-wall characters. Orlando Jones (BEDAZZLED, DOUBLE TAKE) plays Ira's pal, geology professor and women's volleyball coach Harry Block, who is more interested in pursuing nubile students than in rare rock formations. Seann William Scott (AMERICAN PIE, FINAL DESTINATION) plays would-be fireman Wayne Green, whose training for the fireman's exam is interrupted when the impact of the meteor almost destroys his car. The battle by Ira, Harry, and Wayne against the space monsters is joined by two of Ira's students, the Donald brothers (Michael Bower and Ethan Suplee), who could be described as the Bill and Ted of Glen Canyon Community College. "We were laughing about that the other day,"

Duchovny said.

"When Orlando and I are together, he's usually the goofy one, but when Seann comes around, all of a sudden Orlando becomes serious and Seann is the goofy character. And then we've got these two other characters, played by Ethan and Michael. When they come on, Seann all of a sudden has disdain for them for being stupid. It's like the shit rolling downhill."

Ira's free-spirited gang of goofballs is the opposite side of the coin from the uptight military and government officials who take over the crash site and the mission of containing the aliens. Their leader is Dr. Russell Woodman (Ted Levine, SILENCE OF THE LAMBS), the head of U.S. Army Research and Ira's old boss, who still bears a grudge against the teacher for the vaccine disaster. Woodman's associate is Dr. Allison Reed (Julianne Moore, HANNIBAL), an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control. "They're the straw dogs, the blowhards," Duchovny noted. "Ivan's got a really strong anti-authoritarian streak in him, so if you work for the government, you're not going to fare well in his movies."

For Duchovny, the most challenging aspect of the movie wasn't the physical task of chasing off aliens, but in knowing he was finding the right tone for this broad comedy. "There's an aspect to drama where an audience can leave the theater and say, 'That was pretty good,' or 'That made me a little sad, and I kind of believed it,' but if they leave a comedy and didn't laugh, it's no good," he said. "There's no in between. Either you laugh or you don't. And it's scary, every day, to think, 'God, I hope this is funny or that is funny.' Nobody is going to come out of a

THE MIRACLE OF BIRT... HEY, WAIT A SEC: Duchovny's dry sense of humor is balanced by the more raucous Orlando Jones and female straight-lif somewhat klutzy) person Julianne Moore

comedy going. 'I didn't laugh once, but I loved it.' You don't know if the tone you're supplying is going to work. Because we were dealing with world-threatening situations in EVOLUTION, a lot of the times we played scenes very differently with each take. Sometimes we played the reality of the fear and the magnitude of the situation, and sometimes we just went for the joke, not knowing what would be funnier or better. Then Ivan would get it to the editing room and have his choice." Duchovny and the other cast members would often improvise on the set, trying out lines and gags not found in the script. "Ivan is open to making the scenes make sense—sometimes what works on the page doesn't work once you get it out there, and he doesn't want it to be too silly."

Ira not only finds new purpose in chasing down aliens, but his love life gets a boost, when the brainy Dr. Reed realizes that there is more to Ira than she first thought, and that his solution for defeating the aliens makes a lot more sense than the government's. "Julianne's just a regular gal, hard-working and unpretentious, willing to try anything, just

ALL THE FUN, NONE OF THE GOO SLOBBER: Ivan Reitman (left, foreground) has wanted to reunite with Duchovny since casting the actor in BEETHOVEN.

game," Duchovny said of his leading lady. "We were both trying to be. It was a different genre for both of us. We were both a little terrified, so we relied on each other a little bit."

Many of the creatures Ira confronts in EVOLUTION were created through CGI, and Duchovny often found himself emoting into thin air or in front of a blue or green screen, a situation he was familiar with from THE X-FILES. "It gets back to when you first start acting. You're not acting with people, you're just doing sensory exercises and recreating your cup of coffee in the morning, and that's basically green screen, imagining something that doesn't exist."

Duchovny is keeping mum about upcoming projects. Meanwhile, his on-screen counterpart, Dr. Ira Kane, is off saving the world, with some help from his friends.

How does it feel to save the world?

"I'm used to it," Duchovny joked.

"I'd have to say, 'Aw shucks!'"

CPQ



Tim Burton Tackles a Sixties Classic...

PLANET OF THE APES

By Ross Plesset

PLANET OF THE APES came about after several ill-fated attempts to revive the franchise by the likes of Oliver Stone and James Cameron. It was in early 2000, however, that a script by William Broyles, Jr. (*CAST AWAY*) attracted Tim Burton to the property, and finally set the re-

make (or "reimagining," as Burton described it) into motion. In some regards, this new version follows the premise of the original film—astronauts land on a planet where civilization is firmly in the hairy paws of simians—but there are many new characters and situations. Chimpanzee General Thade (Tim Roth, *BODIES, REST & MOTION*) is a clear villain, and rebellious Air Force pilot Leo Davidson (Mark Wahlberg, *THREE KINGS*), replaces Colonel George Taylor, played by Charlton Heston in the first film. There is also some sexual tension between Davidson and Ari, a chimpanzee human rights activist (Helena Bonham Carter, *MERLIN*), although the filmmakers are quick to dispel the prevalent rumor that an interspecies love scene was once considered. In addition to new characters, the movie also has a different twist ending courtesy of Burton.

Executive producer on the project was Ralph Winter, whose impressive credits include *STAR TREK III:VI* ("*STAR TREK IV* is my absolute favorite," he enthused) and *X-MEN*. Of director Burton, Winter remarked: "I think this is one of the best relationships I've ever had on a movie. Tim is quite the professional. He's a wonderful guy; he's able to say 'please' and 'thank you' and know his job. He was very collaborative in making the movie. Really, due to Tim's de-

sire and his ability to make decisions, we brought this picture very close to schedule and right on budget. That's pretty extraordinary for this sized project."

One of Winter's first actions was to recommend hiring makeup guru Rick Baker (*GORILLAS IN THE MIST*). "I had worked with Rick on *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, and when I came aboard I immediately said, 'This is the only guy for the job.' So Dick Zanuck called him, we met with him and said, 'You've got to come aboard.' It's a movie of a lifetime for him... Rick actually brought over a test that he had done on his own, unsolicited from us, and that also put us over the edge."

"Rick was totally moved by the original *PLANET OF THE APES*, so he wanted this job more than anything," added production supervisor Jason McGatlin, who worked closely with Baker in coordinating the makeup elements on this project and on *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS*. "He did a test on his own of this orangutan on a guy named Matt Rose who works in his shop. The makeup was just so amazing!" The orangutan became the basis for the character of Senator Nado, played by Glenn Shadix (*BEEBLEJUICE*).

Baker and his crew, which included his close colleagues Toni G. and Kazu Tsugi, conceived and developed the makeup on a tight schedule. "We were actually still on *THE GRINCH* when Rick got this film," said McGatlin. "Rick said, 'From the time that an actor's hired, we need 18 weeks to design the makeup to make it work. When they came on the movie, Tim hadn't really worked out the kinks in the script well enough to want to cast anybody yet. So oftentimes we got down to a point where it



A full-page photograph of Mark Wahlberg as the character Tero, an astronaut, seen from behind. He is wearing a dark, form-fitting spacesuit with orange and yellow mechanical details on the shoulders and chest. His arms are raised, and he is standing against a bright, cloudy sky. The lighting is dramatic, with the character silhouetted against the bright background.

NEW EVOLUTION Mark Wahlberg (opposite page) is an astronaut who has to cope with a new pecking order in Tim Burton's *PLANET OF THE APES*. **THIS PAGE** Tim Roth is military leader Thede.

was like nine weeks [until production]. Rick's shop was just going crazy trying to get makeups together."

Early in the design process, there was a "blue-sky" stage, where a number of outlandish characters were devised, most of which were discarded. These included an ape with a buzz cut and a cigar, dubbed "The Sarge," apes with dressings such as dreadlocks, nose rings, large hooped earrings, "funky pony tail-type things," according to Winter, and African facial scar tattoos.

"I liked the original concepts better, because they were so different than any apes you've ever seen," commented McGatlin. "[Rick] thought that Tim was going to be way different from the original movie, but [he and Tim] redid the concepts to make them more apelike."

Oftentimes, the makeups evolved significantly after the actors were cast. Such was the case with Ari, played by Helena Bonham Carter. "When you first see a makeup, the concept may be great, but when you put it on a person you go, 'Hmmm, that doesn't work at all,'" laughed McGatlin. "They probably did nine or ten different looks on Helena before they finally got to one that they were comfortable with. They didn't want her to be so unappealing that you wouldn't believe that Mark [Wahlberg] actually likes her."

Generally, the female apes were the hardest ones to develop. "I think the toughest one to design was a character played by Deep Roy [OREYSTOKE]," he continued. "He's a little guy from India, and he plays a little girl! It was so tough for Rick to design a makeup on him that would look like a

little girl. I remember the first screening [of the test footage]. Rick was horrified. He said, 'Oh my God, it's never going to work!' He had to redesign it and redesign it. Finally, he got it to look amazing. It shocks you when you think there's a guy in the little girl's makeup!"

The malevolent General Thade, played by Tim Roth, also presented challenges. "When we first started this movie, Rick said, 'The only way that this makeup is going to work is if the each character has a flat face and a flat nose,' and that's how we were supposed to cast the movie. Then they brought Tim Roth in, who doesn't have a flat face or a flat nose. I think that was really rough for Rick. He kept designing different looks for him." Baker's reason for wanting actors with flat faces and flat noses may have been justified (and is explained later), but Richard Zanuck, having learned many lessons from overseeing the original PLANET OF THE APES, insisted that the apes be cast according to the actors' talents.

In spite of all the technical advances made in makeup since the 1968 PLANET OF THE APES, Baker used similar techniques on this film. "They were trying to figure out different ways of doing the makeup," said McGatlin, "and they ultimately came back to doing prosthetics, which is the exact same process they did for the original PLANET OF THE APES, except that it's more skilled today."

One notable difference between the work of original APES makeup artist John Chambers and Rick Baker, however, is the design of the mouthpieces. According to McGatlin, "The original makeup artist made cuplike pieces that went over the lip and stuck out. The actors had to seriously move their faces to make the makeup move. In those days, the prosthetic makeup wasn't nearly as soft as it is these days. Rick incorporated the lower lip into the makeup. The old makeupers looked like talking coconutshells that was Rick Baker's whole idea behind the flat face. If the actor has a flat face, you

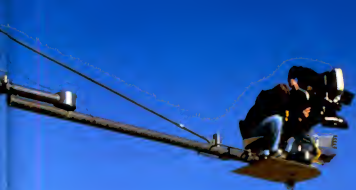
can go right onto their lips, but if they have a big nose, the [makeup] has to come out and try to get back to the lips. That's why Tim fear with Tim [Roth]. . . . [The prosthetics are] so thin, sometimes you can hold them up and see the light through them. There's no to the slightest indentations."

With the number of apes reaching nearly 150, it would have been impractical to apply four-hour makeups on everybody. Baker, therefore, devised ape faces that varied in sophistication, dubbed #1's, #2's and #3's. "Number ones were primary speaking apes," explained Winter. "In general, they would have a four-hour makeup. They had dentures that were made for them, with teeth that extended their jaws to be more apelike. The actors needed to practice with those teeth. Some of them would read the newspaper out loud or sing show tunes just to get used to those extra appendages on their mouths. Those are the [makeups] that are going to hold up on a sixty-foot-wide screen and look spectacular. Then we had #2 apes for our stunt people and others that might be within ten feet of camera. Number threes, which I call costume masks, could just be pulled over the actors' heads, and they were twenty-five feet from the camera, or further. We made 150 of those masks."

The daily application of the makeups was a major operation. "Sometimes we may have had as many as 75 makeup artists on this movie in [what was] truly a twenty-four hour operation," recalled Winter. "The makeup artists would come in at one in the morning to prepare their work stations for the actors coming in at two, getting them ready for a 7:30 call. They also maintained the makeups during the day. Then those makeup artists would go home at some point in the afternoon to get sleep, and another team would take over maintaining the makeup. Then it's a painstaking forty-five to ninety minutes to get the makeup off so that you don't remove that outer layer of skin. If you damage the skin or make it raw, you wouldn't be able to put the makeup on



Ape maneuvers on location



by Friday.

"Then there were people [there] afterwards who were repairing the makeup, the hairpieces, the gloves and all those things that had been torn or scratched or the paint had come off. Those things had to be repaired, aired out and sanitized. And by the time those people are just finishing, here comes the one o'clock crew into work for the next day. So we really ran a twenty-four hour operation, no matter where we were, whether it was in the water out at Lake Powell, on-stage, out in the desert, or in Hawaii."

As the apes were being developed, Burton worked with his colleagues to define the film's look. Production designer Rick Heinrichs (SLEEPY HOLLOW) explained: "The original film, which we all love, had its take on the story within the budgetary considerations it had to take into account. Likewise, we had our own restraints. Tim's films all seem to inhabit a world of their own anyway, and our challenge was to create a believable environment that told its part of the story with believable continuity.

"In the first film there was a bit of a Southern California/Southwestern look going on that works fabulously, but we intentionally turned away from that in our choice of sets and locations. Nevertheless, we did shoot at Lake Powell, where they shot some of the sequences from the original film.

"One of the things that we were attempting to do was create some starkly contrasted environments. [Mark Wahlberg] goes from the calm, professional, smooth, and ovalar shapes of his spaceship and gets thrust into this chaotic, organic, and hostile environment of the planet. Within the different environments of the planet itself, we have diversity as well. There's sort of a graphic, primordial feel of the lava locations that we shot in Hawaii, contrasted to the more lush, organic forest areas that the apes live in."

With the extensive preparations made, production began on November 6, 2000. "Our first location was our most difficult," remarked Winter. "We began the movie in Lake Powell, ironically, in the general location where they had filmed the first movie, which wasn't our intention. There are very

few places on the planet earth where you can find rock and water and no vegetation, and that's what Tim wanted.

"So we found a great spot, and then we had to push the start date in towards November. The temperature dropped 20 or 25 degrees from when we had scouted it, and the water level was dropping. So we had to pump in 2200 gallons a minute, 24 hours a day just to get the water level up in a little lagoon by the lake. When we had all the water in there it appeared to the American Humane Society that it was just too cold for even the horses to go in the water. So now, a week before we started shooting—at this point we had to go no matter what the weather was—it started to rain and the water was getting cold, so we brought in a huge heat pump. We laid a pipe in the sand, and we tried to make it into a hot tub. We started heating Lake Powell to get the temperature up from 57-degree water up into 80 or 85-degree water.

"We were shooting all night, and everybody was bundled up because they were freezing and you didn't know who the crew was. People asked each other, 'What do you do?' Because it was so dark out there, we had whistles and flashlights for everyone—we didn't want anyone in the thick clothing to fall overboard and get hurt. All of the equipment had to be dragged by hand and muscled into the spot. It was very, very tough, but we got great footage, and it sort of bonded the crew for the rest of the movie."

Production then moved to the Sony Pictures Studios, on sets designed by Rick Heinrichs. Heinrichs, who has worked with Burton for 20 years, regards their collaborations as career high points (in addition to his projects with Joel and Ethan Coen: FARGO and THE BIG LEBOWSKI). Among his favorite achievements on PLANET OF THE APES was the enormous

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PLANET OF THE APES

Unfilmed Scripts

The Likes of Oliver Stone and James Cameron Have All Taken a Shot at Reviving the Franchise

By Ross Plesset

The current "reimagining" of *PLANET OF THE APES* follows many unsuccessful attempts throughout the late 1980s and '90s to revive the franchise. In 1988 director-screenwriter Adam Rifkin (*SMALL SOLDIERS*) attempt-

ed to mount a sequel to the original film. "At the time, people were more familiar with the original films," he noted. "At the time when I wrote mine, everybody thought that the idea of a sequel was a much cooler idea. Everybody had grown up with them on TV."

Rifkin, then only 21, had re-

cently completed his independent film *NEVER ON TUESDAY*, and although the film wasn't released, it got him well connected at 20th Century Fox. He immediately expressed interest in the *PLANET OF THE APES* property, and then-president Craig Baumgarten commissioned a script. Charlie Sheen, who had appeared in *NEVER ON TUESDAY*, expressed an interest in the project.

Just as James Cameron used Roger Corman-school techniques to make *ALIENS* look more expensive than it was, Rifkin wanted to apply his own independent film principles on this project to create production value beyond the actual budget. "I wanted it to be like an old Hollywood-style epic in the vein of *SPARTACUS* or *BEN HUR*," he said. "I thought that it would be really cool to do it in an ancient Roman style, but of course it would be set in ape world."

"...It opened with a clip from the first one, with Charlton Heston on the beach pounding the sand and a pull-back to the Statue of Liberty. Then it was going to fade to black, and the caption would say, '300 years later...' I was going to ignore the other sequels and just make it a sequel to the first one... The story was sort of what you might expect: the human revolt against the repressive apes, with a Charlton Heston descendant being the Spartacus-esque leader of the human revolt, the apes being the Nazi-like villains of the piece. Also, the ape world was rife with civil war as the gorillas and the chimpanzees were fighting for power and the orangutans were sort of caught in the middle. It was go-

ing to be very, very violent. There were great gladiatorial sequences in this coliseum because the apes would have humans thrown to their deaths. *GLADIATOR* did a lot of what I wanted to do." Various endings were written, including one with a celebration at the base of the Statue of Liberty and a "nihilistic, '70s ending."

The project derailed because of a change of presidents at the studio. In the early '90s it was revisited, but a proposed Don Murphy/Oliver Stone prequel-remake, which Rifkin maintains occurred independently of his project, took precedence.

It was the Murphy/Stone project that put the remake back into play. "I was working with Oliver Stone back in '94," recalled producer and "Apes" fan Don Murphy (*APT PUPIL*). "There was a young executive at Fox, who's now a head of Fox Searchlight, named Peter Rice. He and I kept talking about doing a *PLANET OF THE APES* redo. He said, 'Why don't you come up with a director like Sam Raimi?' I kept saying, 'I don't know, I don't know.' Then one day I mentioned it to Oliver, and he was excited."

"My ex-partner Jane [Hamsher], Oliver, and I met with the Fox people. The next thing you know, Terry Hayes, who did *THE ROAD WARRIOR*, was writing the script. The studio really liked it. The script attracted the attention of Phillip Noyce (*PATRIOT GAMES*) to direct, and Arnold Schwarzenegger to star... I approached Rick Baker [to do the makeup]—he was obviously a great choice—but then Arnold got involved, and

OTHER WORLDS, OTHER STORIES: Humans confront an ape "scarecrow." Previous attempts at mounting a *PotA* revival ranged all the way from delving deep into the past to hewing more closely to the original novel.



Arnold always worked with Stan Winston, so he got involved.... It was a completely different rethink. We were having meetings, and we thought we were making it."

Oliver Stone concurs that Schwarzenegger was considered for the lead but claims no firm decision had been made. "We never went that far with an actor because we didn't have a script, but Arnold was very interested in it," he said. "We also talked to Stallone about doing the [had] ape man. That was a great idea, but Sylvester didn't want to play an ape-man if Arnold was playing a man! [Laughs] Sylvester and I are friends, but it was a moment where he was quite hurt.... He laughs about it today."

Murphy continued: "Oliver had this theory that time was circular rather than linear, that all times kind of looped around on each other. When this genetic disease erupted on earth, Arnold literally incorporated his body now and reincorporated it at the beginning of time. There was an ancient ape civilization that, because of things like pride and miscommunication, self-destructed. I think his idea was that [the world] could have begun and ended with an ape civilization. He [Arnold] goes back to the beginning of time, which is an ape civilization, and then, in the other movies, the world ends with an ape civilization. So he was going for this idea that the world begins and ends with ape civilizations."

Stone elaborated: "I thought the original films were fun, but I think we could have done something that was original using the themes. 'How did man supplant the ape, how did we progress and the apes did not, and when did it start?' Those were the themes that I thought were interesting. Going into the future and finding an ape race that is potentially superior to ours is also interesting, but that was done. I think that's also a very valid theme, but it's less interesting to me than the possibility that there was intergeneric breeding that happened.... I get criticized for being theme-oriented, but Jesus Christ, I don't know what other solution there is. We had a great idea for a theme, and I think it would have worked. I think Terry was on the right path."

Indeed, Terry Hayes's first draft script had a compelling premise about apes—all gorillas—attempting to commit genocide against prehistoric humans. Their plan: To introduce humankind to a rare genetic disorder found in infant simians. The apes regard humans as "children of the Devil," and in their version of Revelations—which is decidedly less ambiguous than ours—a blue-eyed human (the time traveler) will bring about their destruction.

There were certain aspects of Hayes's first draft script that needed to be worked out, and that probably would have happened in the rewrites. For example, the protagonist uses sensory deprivation, as in *ALTRID STATES*, to travel back in time, but the theories behind this are not explained.



POLITICS NEVER CHANGE: General Thade (Tim Roth, left) works his influence on an ape senator (David Warner). Each version strove to present its take on the human condition through the lens of ape society.

Also, when he arrives in Kenya 102,000 years in the past, he immediately converses with the primitive humans in English, and the apes also speak English.

Despite a script with possibilities and a talented crew, the project fell apart. "The studio had a little bit of a shake-up, and the politics changed," remembered Murphy. "They weren't so secure with Oliver or with Phillip. The project just languished for a little while, and then they heard that Chris Columbus, a guy who they had a lot of faith in at the time, was interested. To do that, they had to get rid of Oliver, and that in turn got rid of me, and that was pretty much the end of my involvement."

Stone added: "[Terry Hayes] wrote a script which was not bad, but it wasn't quite what we wanted either. If I had come in at that point and said, 'I will rewrite it, commit as a director and really push this through to conclusion,' I think there is a chance it would have gotten made. I was not in a position to do that—I was on to NIXON at that point. I wasn't in a place of mind to do an action-spectacular movie: I wanted to do this political meditation. I basically let it go."

Under Chris Columbus, screenwriter Sam Hamm (*BATMAN*) wrote a script about astronauts actually traveling to another planet populated by apes *a la* Pierre Boullé's original novel. Also, like the book, the ape civilization is technologically advanced, and there are even monkey bars going over streets instead of crosswalks. Columbus went so far as to do tests of apes skiing down mountains for a sequence where gorillas would hunt humans in the snow, but the project did not go much further.

James Cameron's involvement occurred in the mid-1990s, and although a script was never completed, his take was completely different from that of Terry Hayes or Chris Columbus. Screenwriter Graham Yost

(*CHALLENGER*), who had already done some work on Terry Hayes's script, was called back to work with Cameron. "I met with Jim several times—once on video link because he was down in Mexico doing *TITANIC*, and a couple of times out at his house when he would be back editing *TITANIC*, and I went down to the set a couple times," he recalled.

"Then I started writing, and we made it about a trip to the future and followed the original in some ways, but [the protagonist] was a time traveler. I started working on it, and it was at a very hard time for me because I was a producer on *FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON*, and I was living in Florida and was also gearing up to direct an episode. I thought I was going to have all these days off to work on *APES*, and I just didn't. 'Apes' just kind of went by the wayside. I did about sixty or seventy pages, and they said, 'Well, we want to see that,' and I made the mistake of turning that in. Never, ever turn in something until it's complete! Actually, that was a blessing because it got me off the project. I was going down a road that they were not interested in. I look back and go, 'What the hell was I thinking?'" It took me so long to get the story going and establishing the central premise. I was just really laboring over it."

Because of Cameron's increasing involvement in *TITANIC*, his association with the project ended. At this point the studio stopped attaching big directors and producers to the project and concentrated solely on generating a script. Several writers were considered, and then, in early 2000, a screenplay by William Broyles, Jr. (*APOLLO 13*), caught the interest of Tim Burton.

"Peter Rice, the head of Fox Searchlight, never let it die," noted Don Murphy. "He's the reason that it got made. He was the only one who was there at the beginning that was still involved at the end."



SUPERIOR SPECIES AT HOME: The new *PLANET*'s variegated scenery contrasts sharply with the original's southern California look. **RIGHT:** Director Tim Burton on location.

ape city set, which occupied Stage 27 on the Sony lot. Pierre Bouille's 1963 novel *Planet of the Apes* has the primates living in a technologically modern society, with cars, airplanes, TVs, and artificial satellites. Like the 1968 movie, though, this version depicts a relatively primitive ape society. "It doesn't present the apes as that kind of a technologically-advanced race," he noted. "Visually that doesn't feel right anyway—there could be almost any sort of an alien race flying around in ships. What we're after is the upside down world with the apes on top and the humans as the animal slaves—that's the crux of the whole story."

He discussed his inspirations for the city. "At the beginning of any film you just pull in all of the research that relates to your personal take of what's appropriate and start exploring it. I spoke to Bill Creber, the production designer of the original film, and he had actually come up with some of the same sources that I was pulling from. There's an area of Central Anatolia in Turkey called Cappadocia with very peculiar natural rock formations, formed by the

reached fruition. "It was budget trimming and a honing of the script that deleted those things... We didn't just draw them up, we made models of them, we fully drafted them up, and often when a set gets cut, quite a bit of time and expense has been spent on it. We explored different interior sets for General Thade before the scenes were cut. A favorite set involved a banquet scene that allowed us to fill out the back story of the main bad monkey. It was an oppressive backdrop for the character, always a fun assignment. There were carved columns that vaulted over the banquet area,



that reigns over the action that takes place. On the Oheron, there is a combination of various iconic shapes of circles and eggs...

"Rick Baker said, 'The only way this makeup is going to work is if each actor has a flat face and a flat nose.' Then they brought in Tim Roth."

—Production Supervisor Jason McGatlin

erosion of the earth into strange, almost Sessuian, humplike shapes that people would carve out their domiciles into. It was this combination of natural forms with the artistic and sculptural work that appealed to me, and apparently appealed to him as well. Our cities look different—ours is a different take on it—but it was kind of interesting that some of the inspiration was similar."

Many designs for the city's interior never

in addition to a very large fireplace to illuminate and backlight the main characters.

"We were going to do some more build-on-location. Once again, money was a factor there. For instance, we wanted to build the gates of the city on location, and the decision was made to save money on that and just see the city in the distance in a miniature form." (Heinrichs's design for the gate was used on the model city built by Indus-

An architect named Santiago Calatrava was also very inspirational for the organic beauty of the structure in his work. There is a maternal character to the space station that feels appropriate to it and compliments the believability we're trying to put across."

When Heinrichs discussed his work, the subject of money often came up. "I know you don't like to hear about that part, but

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PLANET OF THE APES

Tim Roth

The Actor's First Big Studio Production is also a Crash Course in Mask Acting

Unlike the 1968 *PLANET OF THE APES*, Tim Burton's "reimagining" has a clear villain, General Thade, played by Tim Roth (*ANIMALS*). "He's a purist," said Roth. "He wants to veer away from the desegregation of humans and apes. He's a juicy, juicy monster."

Roth's involvement came about because of his strong desire to work with Tim Burton, strong enough to compel him to choose *PLANET OF THE APES* over *HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE*. "At first the studios were working it out so that I could do both, but in the end I just decided to let that one go," he said. "I really wanted to concentrate on working with Tim. My basic rule is to do only one thing at a time."

"I had never worked on a studio film, but when I was working on the set with him, it was very similar to working with a director on an independent film. He had many, many more problems with regards to money, but once we had peace and quiet for a second, it came down to the same thing: directors talking to actors. I like working with him because he has a good, twisted vision of whichever world he was inhabiting at the moment."

Roth found Burton very open to ideas. "We would work on the dialog just before we were shooting and while we were shooting and while we were free process.... If I wanted [Thade] to be like a shark, we would work on how to make that come across."

Although the ape makeup



REACHING BEYOND THE RUBBER: Actor Tim Roth picked *PLANET OF THE APES* over a role in *HARRY POTTER* for the opportunity to work with Tim Burton, but had to face the challenges of working in Rick Baker's elaborate ape makeup. ABOVE: Roth as General Thade waits for the cameras to roll.

was sometimes uncomfortable, overall, Roth enjoyed it. "When you're actually performing in it, it's great. It's when you're doing a lot of sitting around that it becomes like having a bad cold. Some days were worse than others. It's pretty hard when you can't blow your nose and you're working in dust storms. Eating is completely depressing. It pissed me off when people looked at me and went 'Woah!!' I felt like an animal at the zoo. People feel that they can just stare at you while you're in the middle of a conversation with somebody else."

"I loved the idea of doing 'mask acting,' as Tim calls it.

It's like Japanese theater. I found it really, really interesting. It's a good bit of humility for an actor to be unrecognizable for that length of time on screen. I enjoyed playing somebody who wasn't human."

Besides helping Roth get into character, the makeup helped him create Thade's voice. "Having the makeup on partially blocks your hearing, so you're very aware of your voice on the interior. You never really want to hear your own voice, so I just changed my voice, and then it became a habit. It looked like they were going to do a lot of revoicing, but they got to like it." On the down side, the voice

was uncomfortable to perform. "I've just been doing some revoicing, and it almost made me nauseous! [Laughs] It's hard to concentrate on it for any length of time."

Roth judges his movies based primarily on how well he gets along with the cast and crew, and, in this regard, he rates *PLANET OF THE APES* highly. "Paul Giamatti was really good fun, as was Michael Clarke Duncan and Mark Wahlberg. These were good people. You could go to the pub with them.... It was hard work, painful at times, but seriously good fun."

- Ross Plesset

PLANET OF THE APES

CARY-HIROYUKI TAGAWA

Playing for Dignity in Decline Underneath the Makeup

The ape Krull promises to be one of the most interesting characters in *PLANET OF THE APES*. No less interesting is the performer behind him, martial arts trainer-actor Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa (*THE LAST EMPEROR*).

Tagawa was cast in the movie when Tim Burton was scouting locations in the actor's home of Kauai and requested a meeting. "He said he had always admired my movement, my physical presence, which was critical for this piece," recalled Tagawa.

The meeting was followed by some uncertainty. "Originally I was supposed to play Michael Clarke Duncan's role [General Attar]," he said. "I had even done costume fittings, but when they announced that Michael Clarke Duncan was going to play the general, I got a little nervous [laughs]. They said, 'There's a new draft coming out—we don't know if Cary's in it.' But I found out later that Tim was very clear that he wanted to find something for me in the movie, and they created this character. [Krull] was actually an afterthought."

Throughout the project Tagawa had considerable creative input, which began with his creating a backstory. "My character is a servant in Ari's household. I came to the household from the Red Army, the same army that General Thade leads. The back story is that I was part of the army, I opposed Tim Roth. He was going to have me killed, and Senator Sandar, Ari's father, befriended me and asked to have me spared. General Thade said, 'Only under two conditions.' One is that I become a servant to demean me

and secondly is that I never have anything to do with the Red Army again. So I accept those terms and now, as the adventure begins, the warrior nature emerges again."

This backstory prompted Tagawa to make suggestions to Rick Baker. "I had some ideas. I really hesitated at first because makeup is not my field. I thought, 'What the heck, all he can do is say no.' So I threw in some suggestions, and he listened to them graciously. He's such a great guy. We made the character look stronger than they originally planned. In the story he was just a servant. He was meeker and not very much of a physical presence, but now, in the movie, Krull is very physically present. By the end he certainly has proven himself the warrior again."

During production, Tagawa continued making suggestions to Burton, which resulted in a richer character. "We added stuff as we went along. Here we had a silverback gorilla who's in the hero group, and all the other gorillas are bad guys. I thought, *He represents the ape energy in the good guy's side, so why not give him a little creative conflict with Mark Wahlberg's character?* In my own backstory, a human had killed my parents, so naturally we had this animosity that led to us working together. We actors are always trying to create some arc in our characters, and Tim Burton was gracious to listen to those ideas."

Actors have various ways of coping with heavy makeup, and Tagawa found his method. "My martial arts experience did help there! I have the ability to get my body to cool down when it's



COMPLEX PAST: Tim Burton had the role of a soldier in disgrace created especially for Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa.

hot and simply put my mind on colder times and colder places. I have used this process before but never in such a horrendous work environment that requires so much focus."

Tagawa also found his own ways of eating while in makeup. "They had us eat with mirrors because the prosthetic went further than our own lips. We had to miss the [fake] lip and get it down our mouths. So the first time I was eating with this mirror I was looking at this ape, and I was getting hypnotized. I was thinking, 'God, I'm feeding this ape but it's going down my throat!' I ended up using another technique, which was to stick my tongue out past my mouth. I've got a long tongue, so I just stuck it out and shoveled the food down. I just couldn't keep looking at the mirror anymore."

To get into a gorilla's state of mind, Tagawa used information from various wildlife documentaries. "The script called for ferociousness, but as I watched, I picked out three other traits: one was intuition, another was instinct, and the third was sensitivity—bingo, that's me!"

Normally when a director calls "cut," an actor can relax their facial muscles and begin talking in their normal voice. However, in this case, because Tagawa still had the makeup on, he felt a need to stay in character. "I had to be careful not to talk to too many people or my mind would get out of [Krull's] deep voice." He also main-

tained his ape body movements and ape mentality between takes. "During that time I would do monkey tricks on people. We had a jungle set, and I would climb up in a tree, wait for Tim Burton and jump on him. The paths in this jungle were very narrow, and people would be working. They would call me to the set. I have animal body control, so I would go running full speed and I could dodge them. Everybody would go, 'Here he comes! Clear the set!' Other times I would sneak up on people, and I would stand behind them right next to their face, with my ape makeup. Sometimes I would stand there for like five minutes—I'm a very patient guy. I picked each person on the crew, so by the end of the movie everybody had their Tagawa ape moment. So I would do things like that to stay focused. The body movement was a big deal."

He mentioned one drawback to the ape movements. "That was the hardest thing to shake once the movie was over! [Laughs] I would be running across the street and break into this ape movement! I had done it so much."

Tagawa sees *PLANET OF THE APES* as a welcome departure from straight action films: being a father, he hopes to do more youth-oriented films, however, he says. "I'm more than just an actor. I really am a teacher first."

—Ross Plesset

patterns that I could use. I don't know how much I'll use them—these are my first impulses. I already have a lot of very big, hard hits on stuff, and sometimes really soft playing on big drums is where you can get a lot of fun and intense stuff. The percussion is where I always have the most fun because I lay that out as I'm composing, and that's what stays. Everything else that I write gets replaced by the orchestra. I don't rerecord the percussion."

Although Rick Baker's makeup comprises most of the film's effects, at the time of writing, Winter expected the film to have 200 visual effects shots. Industrial Light & Magic was slated to handle 100 to 133 of them, with other companies, primarily engaged in wire-removal for stunt scenes, doing the remainder. "We're all over that," said Winter. "Tim has turned over footage ahead of time, and we're a little ahead of schedule on delivering. We're in extraordinary shape on that."

Being the effects supervisor of *PLANET OF THE APES* is the fulfillment of a child-

like dream for George. "We are using CG, miniatures, stage photography, and plate photography... I like mixing up elements. It makes it a more interesting project to work on. Plus, at ILM, we're booked for a certain amount of resources, and we don't always have everything at our fingertips. So it helps a show if we balance it out over a number of different departments."

A major undertaking was a series of vast battle scenes and tracking shots featuring apes and humans. "A lot of that was shot during second unit photography in the Mojave Desert," he noted. "What we would do is shoot a variety of passes that we will then composite together, which is an old technique in concept, but we're using very, very complicated ways of extruding the mattes and mixing the layers together."

An elaborate miniature was built for a sequence where a spaceship crash-lands in a jungle. Some of this was shot full-sized at Sony, but, as Winter observed: "You can only push a two-ton spaceship around so far. In a miniature, we have much more flexibility."

Hence, a one-quarter scale jungle was erected at ILM. "We matched as best we could the live action jungle set," explained George. "That was a huge undertaking—it was a really, really big set. I'm very happy with it. I was a big fan of *SPACE: 1999*, and you may remember when the Eagles would crash in the forest—it was just so cool! [Laughs] So

then you've cut your costs tremendously. Sometimes our decisions are based on that."

A space phenomenon, which Wahlberg encounters early in the film was also realized with CG. "We put together animatics and proposals. That's been going on [since] before we even started shooting principal photography... [The phenomenon] could be anything, and there's no right or wrong answer... The first thing I always do is put together a reference tape, and in this case it included *DEEP SPACE NINE* and a bunch of the *STAR TREK* stuff we had done, and even *holkey* films. We used that as a jump-off point, a point of discussion. We say, 'This is what's been done before, now where do we go from here?' We showed it to Tim, and he got a few laughs because there were some really *holkey* movies on there. Then we started talking about what it is and what it isn't, and he had some very specific ideas about what it isn't. It shouldn't have electricity, it shouldn't have lightning bolts coming off of it. I think we've come up with something that's visually interesting and very different. One of the great things here at ILM is we do have different crews working on different, isolated projects. Many times I'll take my work and show it to somebody else on another show and say, 'What do you think?' and you get a fresh pair of eyes to give you a critique."

"When the show first started we had these visions of CG apes up in the trees brachiating. Unfortunately, we just didn't have time to do that because that involves modeling and rendering. The second unit and stunt people came up with ways of flying monkeys on wires and allowing them to do those types of things full size on the set."

Like many *PLANET OF THE APES* crew members, George is a devout fan of the original film who is also excited about this "reimagining." "The first one is just so strong, at first I had some doubts about it: *Can they really pull this off? Is it going to be any good?* But it's gone to such a different level, the makeup especially. It's so rich and detailed. The first one is pretty austere. You've got the makeup and the ape costumes, but the city isn't all that big. There are not that many props, a lot of it is Charlton Heston in a loincloth."

Screenwriter Graham Yost, who worked on the James Cameron incarnation (see page 26), remarked: "The Statue of Liberty ending and the line, 'Get your hands off me, you damned dirty ape!' are part of my life, but my kids have never seen *PLANET OF THE APES*. I think there's nothing wrong with revisiting it. It's a classic, but it's not a perfect classic. When you look at it now you say, 'Wow, they just shot out in the desert there, the makeup is okay, but it looks kind of rubbery.' You think, 'Oh my God, it could be done on a bigger scale now, and why not?'"



HARMONY AMONGST THE SPECIES: Tim Burton directs Lisa Marie (left) and Burton regular Glenn Shadix (center).

hood dream for ILM's Bill George (*GALAXY QUEST*). "I'm a HUGE fan of the original film," he enthused. "When I was ten years old my mom said, 'What do you want for your birthday?' and I said, 'I want to go see this new movie called *PLANET OF THE APES*.' It scared the crap out of me [laughs] and I loved it! I was also a fan of all the following films, the TV show, and the animated series. I have a picture of myself in this ape makeup that I made when I was thirteen—I look like a burn victim! I was so into it, so to come back many, many years later and to actually be working on the film is so great."

Although *PLANET OF THE APES* is being characterized as a traditional effects film, "We're using just about every tech-

nic here is my homage."

Another miniature, a nearly six-foot-wide model of an ape city, was used for long-shots. "Tim [Burton] is a big fan of models," he said. "I found that out on this film. When you look at his earlier films it becomes clear, I think he finds them charming, but also you get a more realistic look."

A space station was being realized with an 18-foot-tall model with back-lit windows, while a space pod that Mark Wahlberg uses to leave the station was CG. "They built [the pods] full sized down in L.A., and we're only using a CG model of that. A practical model wasn't necessary. Sometimes you do have to do both—that's the most expensive way to do it. If you can figure out a way to do it with one medium,

PLANET OF THE APES

TERRY NOTARY

Developing Movement for Ape Society

A dramatic difference between the new **PLANET OF THE APES** and the original is the realistic ape movements, from subtle gestures to leaping and brachiating (moving by swinging the arms from one hold to another). The task of devising movements, training actors, and performing many of the stunts fell to movement coach Terry Notary. A former UCLA gymnast, Notary previously worked for Cirque du Soleil, where he learned animal movements. "There are no animals in the show, so we had to be animals," he explained. "And then I got asked to do **HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS**. Charlie Croughwel, the stunt coordinator, asked me to teach the actors how to move like Whos. I watched the Dr. Seuss cartoons over and over and read a lot of the books and started coming up with this liquidy movement. Charlie Croughwel stunt-coordinated for **PLANET OF THE APES** as well and hired me to teach Ape School."

Notary studied the original **APES** films repeatedly; however, the lesson he came away with was "what not to do [laughs]. They didn't really emphasize the movements. Everybody had something different going on. It didn't look like they had a common gene, which is what we wanted to do with this film."

He found it much more useful to visit the Los Angeles Zoo and watch and play with apes. "I did tons of research on apes and studied how they moved and how they ate," he continued. "We had to come up with a whole new species that was 20 percent ape and 80 percent human—that was the ratio that Tim [Burton] liked. In the be-

ginning we came up with a bunch of different movements that Tim would watch. We started off with 100 percent ape and broke it down to 90 percent and 80 percent. When we got down to 20 percent ape, he said, 'That's it right there! We want it real subtle but believable.' He didn't want a bunch of monkeys running around."

"The orangutans were real slow, graceful and liquid; the chimps were like the warriors," he explained. "They were hyper, super-acrobatic characters, and then the gorillas were like the artillery—boom, boom! If you were to look at it as an army, they were like the tanks, the muscle behind everything."

"...Apes have a little bit of a hard time walking upright, so we wanted to emphasize that. Their hips are built differently—they're real stiff—so they can't just pick a leg up like we do when we walk. Also, they don't move their arms like we do when we walk. Their arms just kind of hang free and they're like these separate appendages. So we had to break through some of these old habits of being human. They had to forget being human and restrain their bodies how to walk."

With the movements defined and the movie cast, Notary imparted the behaviors on the cast at Ape School, which lasted for nearly a month and a half (the extras only went through about three days of training, and many of their movements and activities were improvised on the set with Notary's help). "They would come in, and we'd work with them for about three hours a day. We started with a long warm-up and breathing exercises, and then went into first position, which is



IT AIN'T JUST WALKING ON KNUCKLES: Movement Coordinator Terry Notary (left) discusses positioning with Helena Bonham Carter (center) and Paul Giamatti (right).

feet parallel, and the knees are bowed out, the head slouching and coming forward, and the arms are rounded—everything was round. If you ever watch apes walking or moving, they're always sure-footed and grounded."

"Each actor developed his or her own style, which was perfect, because each chimp has their own personality, and they each have their own way of walking—they're very human in that way. We would see how their bodies moved in that first position, and then we would build up from what their natural movement was. With Tim Roth's Thade, we kind of wanted to emphasize his head looking like a freight train that just stays still and floats on top of his body. Helena [Bonham Carter] is the kind character. She had a lighter, humanlike gait. Michael Clarke Duncan was a gorilla, so we wanted to make him feel really heavy, like a giant walking."

Once Ape School ended and production began, Notary had to keep the actors in their ape movements. "I would always be coming up to [the actors] and say, 'Hey, don't get lazy. Remember the legs, remember the feet, keep them parallel...Remember, when you're crouching around the corner, put your arm up like this, and when you grab the sword, take it from this way, pull it over here, and swipe it that way.' A lot of it was reminding them to stay grounded, to keep everything real heavy [with] no light, quick, jerky movements." Tim Burton

also noticed inconsistencies. "There would be a whole scene with a bunch of extras, and Tim Burton would say, 'Hey, what's this guy doing?' He knew what looked good and what didn't look good, that's for sure."

"Not all of the apes' movements were so subtle and required stunts. [Tim] wanted to also emphasize the strength and power of the apes because they're eight times stronger than humans. So [stunt co-ordinator] Charlie Croughwel had all of these crazy kinds of stunts on ratchets so it would look like we could jump thirty feet and dive from trees that were forty feet high. The battle scenes are crazy because we have apes flinging all over the place. Mini-trampolines were set up so it looked like we could jump twenty feet. A lot of the apes would throw a human twenty-five feet across the battlefield."

"...I doubted for Tim Roth, which was really fun. We got to come up with his character first. We had a good rapport on the movie. He would watch the monitor and kind of critiqued me: 'Remember what we did in Ape School here? Do that!'"

Throughout production, Notary's work got very involved and multi-faceted. "The biggest challenge on the whole movie was doing a lot of the stunts and keeping an eye on everyone else at the same time." However, he is by no means complaining. He loves this kind of work and hopes to do more of it.

—Ross Plesset

PLANET OF THE APES

The Original Series

How a One-Shot Science Fiction Film Turned Into a Decade of Adventure

By Mark Phillips
and Frank Garcia

Producer Arthur P. Jacobs spent almost three years trying to pitch **PLANET OF THE APES** to studios, to no avail. Talking apes

were potentially laughable. When Jacobs got Charlton Heston and director Franklin Schaffner interested, 20th Century Fox reconsidered. Rod Serling's outline, based on Pierre Boulle's 1963 novel *Monkey Planet*, introduced an astronaut who crash-lands on an alien

world ruled by talking apes. The cosmopolitan simians drove cars, piloted helicopters, wore suits and ties, and hunted down humans for sport. Studio executive Richard Zanuck liked the idea but he had one concern: plausible ape makeup. The apes had to look believable for the film to work. Jacobs filmed a five-minute test reel with Edward G. Robinson as an orangutan scientist conversing with astronaut Charlton Heston. Robinson's makeup was primitive but effective (curiously, James Brolin and Linda

Harrison also appeared as chimpanzees, but sans makeup. They were humanoid, with ghoulish, corpse-white faces). The 1966 test film convinced the studio to give make-up artist John Chambers one million dollars to develop an experimental, porous latex ape makeup.

For budget purposes, Michael Wilson rewrote Serling's script, removing the apes' technology and transforming their society. "It was a unique script with a moral viewpoint," noted actor Lou Wagner, who played Zira's outspoken nephew, Lucius. "This was in the 1960s, where people were very conscious of the war and the bomb. The script was mind-boggling to read because it attacked what we felt in our hearts. It was about taking a chance with total annihilation."

Making the Film

Wagner recalled that he, Roddy McDowall, and Kim Hunter sweltered under the makeup in Arizona's one hundred degree temperatures. The production crew realized there were no straws for the actors to drink through to avoid destroying their ape appliances. "Chuck Heston was into running," said Wagner. "He ran back to base camp, about a mile away, and got straws for us. He didn't give it a second thought. He probably doesn't remember that, but it burned in my mind how nice and generous that was."

A team of talented technicians and craftsmen handled every challenge. The Oscar-winning makeup by John Chambers and his crew was the

most ambitious in cinematic history. The gorillas looked ferocious, the chimpanzees looked kind, the orangutans looked wise. The set calls began at 4:30 am and it took four hours to apply the ape makeup to the actors.

Buck Kartalian played Julius, the witty gorilla gatekeeper who dispensed warnings about humans. Kartalian had never worked with Heston before, but as he recalled, "To him, I was just a gorilla and that made our scenes better. When I was hitting him with a rubber club, he said, 'Don't hold back. Hit me harder.' So I hit him harder. He was a very serious and dedicated actor. At the wrap party, I walked up to him and he had no idea who I was. I said, 'It's me, Julius. Be nice to me or I'll club you!' and he laughed."

The impressive Ape City was created at 20th Century Fox's Malibu Ranch. Greg Jensen, who creates and supervises various special effects work for films such as *SPEED* and the upcoming *THE SCORPION KING*, got one of his first assignments building the stone-age Ape City. The city, built over a lake, had to support the weight of actors playing gorillas.

"We first welded a framework together, in the rough shape of the buildings," recalled Jensen. "Then we wrapped it with heavy paper and from inside the structures, we shot a rapid high-expansion foam all over the frame and paper. We pulled the paper off, leaving the hardened foam with the look the art director wanted. Sometimes we needed to carve the foam. It

THE CLASSIC THAT LAUNCHED A PHENOMENON

PLANET OF THE APES



PIERRE BOULLE

Author of *The Bridge over the River Kwai*

was later painted to look like rock."

Today, Ape City exists only in memory. "That area is now Malibu Creek State Park," Jensen said. "The Ape City lake is overgrown with reeds and ninety percent of it is filled in with sand and rocks."

Jensen recalled that in nearby Hunter's Ranch, a field of corn was specifically grown for the hunt sequence. "Every day, two large dump trucks brought the ripened corn to our SFX department. We took as much as we wanted."

Unexploited, natural locations also added to the mystery of the film's initial scenes on the planet. When director of photography Leon Shamroy first glimpsed the spectacular landscape of Utah, he gasped, "God is a helluva set designer."

Soaring temperatures of 110 degrees caused the lute Jeff Burton (Dodge) to faint, and a couple of gorilla extras to go crazy and desperately tear off their ape heads. For trivia buffs, Jonathan Harris (Dr. Smith of LOST IN SPACE) was offered the role of orangutan Dr. Maximus, but Harris's claustrophobic fear of the makeup made him pass. Woodrow Parfrey stepped in.

Low Wagner recalled attending his first screening for a paying audience: "It's so exciting when you know you have the audience. When Taylor said the first words, 'Get your paws off me, you damn, dirty ape!' the audience cheered!"

Wilson's original ending had Taylor killed by a gorilla sniper moments after discovering the statue, and a pregnant Nova riding off alone, carrying Taylor's unborn who will lead the revolt of mankind. It was decided Taylor's breakdown on the beach was more cinematic. However, a scene with Zira diagnosing Nova with child was filmed and discarded.

Wagner recalled that 1968 audiences reacted with audible cries in the theater. "It showed our stupidity of playing with this giant nuclear threat. That's why the script was kept strictly confidential. There was red across the scripts stating that you were not to divulge the contents of the script to anyone for any reason, and the secret was

kept! The reviewers helped too. If you read any of the early reviews, they never revealed the ending."

Kartalain recalled, "Every day after shooting they took our musks away and hid them. They wanted to keep the look of the apes secret."

The other major concern was if the film would work at all. "Schaffner was a little afraid that the entire thing could turn out ludicrous," Kartalain said. "He certainly didn't want it to be funny. When I said my line, 'You know what they say—human see, human do,' he said to me, 'Stop it! Don't try to be funny when you say that line.' I said, 'I'm not trying to be funny. The line is funny. I'm saying it as flat as I can.'"

Schaffner also rejected a very human suggestion from Kartalain. "I said, 'Mr. Schaffner, why not open a scene with me smoking a cigar?' He just looked at me like 'What the hell's wrong with you?' So we rehearsed it with me just sitting there. Then he said, 'OK, let's shoot it... and somebody get Julius a cigar.' He had decided my idea had merit."

Going Beneath and Escaping from the PLANET OF THE APES

A sequel wasn't intended for PLANET, but when it grossed nearly \$25 million, Rod Serling and Pierre Bouille separately worked on sequel scripts. Serling's effort was PLANET OF THE APES REVISITED, while Bouille drafted PLANET OF MEN. In both scripts, Taylor was central to the story.

These were deemed unsatisfactory, and it was British writer Paul Dehn who wrote the first successful draft in September



IMPRESSIONISTIC ENVIRONS: The "Ape City" of the 1968 **PLANET OF THE APES** portrays architecture more in line with sunny New Mexico than lush jungles.

1968. Director Ted Post felt success depended on rounding up the original cast, particularly Heston. A reluctant Heston was convinced to return for a cameo, but only if he were killed off. Roddy McDowall was in England filming a movie, and was replaced by David Watson, who gallantly "aped" McDowall's mannerisms as Cornelius.

Kim Hunter and Maurice Evans reprised their roles of Zira and Zaius. Burt Reynolds was offered the role of Brent, a stranded astronaut but he turned it down, and James Franciscus took the role. Orson Welles declined the role of the burly gorilla general, Ursus (later played by James Gregory).

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (1970) has Taylor kidnapped by human mutants who are living in the underground ruins of New York City. Meanwhile, General Ursus and Dr. Zaius lead thousands of gorillas in an attack against the mutants' city. In the climax, apes shoot down Nova and Brent, and a dying Taylor denounces the mutants' doomsday bomb to destroy the Earth.

Many critics charged that the film's script was derivative and overblown. Even special effects man Greg Jensen wasn't enamored with the film. "I only saw it once but I thought it was a complete waste of time," he said. Indeed, Brent's adventures included familiar capture and

escape sequences. However, when **BENEATH** made over \$14 million at the box office, Paul Dehn was recruited to somehow devise another sequel.

The storyline of **ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES** (1970) was regarded by Dehn and director Don Taylor as a "tragic love story." Cornelius (Roddy McDowall), Zira (Kim Hunter) and simian Dr. Milo (Sal Mineo) escape the Earth's destruction in Taylor's salvaged spaceship. The force of the Earth's destruction propels the ship back to Earth, 1973—one year after Taylor had blasted off.

Milo is accidentally killed before human authorities realize the apes can speak. Befriended by a young couple (Bradford Dillman and Natalie Trundy), the apes are treated as celebrities, but Dr. Hasslein (Eric Braeden) is fearful the duo could spawn a dismal future for mankind. When Zira expects a baby, the apes try to escape from Hasslein, but are shot down. Zira's baby is left behind in the circus of compassionate Armando (Ricardo Montalban), setting the stage for another film.

Conquest of the PLANET OF THE APES

ESCAPE grossed \$10 million, and considering its modest budget, was a success. But the pattern of diminishing returns was

clear, and 20th Century Fox slashed costs with the next film, budgeting it at just under two million dollars. **CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES** (scripted by Paul Dehn) was lensed at the newly made Century City in Los Angeles in 1972. The film was set in a futuristic city of 1991, where bored and callous humans have domesticated apes to be mental servants. Armando (Ricardo Montalhan) and the young chimp Caesar (the grown offspring of Cornelius and Zira, played by Roddy McDowall) arrive to put on a circus act. When security police discovers the ape's true identity and Armando is accidentally killed while in police custody, Caesar angrily mobilizes the gorillas to overthrow the city's military forces. The last half of the film is an aggressive battle between ape and man, with ape triumphant.

Don Murray played Governor Breck, an obsessed, racially-driven man whose hatred of the apes slowly turns to hysterical

astonishment as he sees the apes brewing for revolution. "Most of my career has been devoted to playing 'nice guys,'" explained Murray. "Breck was an opportunity to show versatility, one of the most interesting attributes of a good actor."

The actor prepared for his performance in an unusual way: "I studied for the role by playing every scene I had in German—a language with which I am fluent—because the Nazi period was the epitome of dictatorial rule. I was gratified to read one critic's description of Breck as a 'chilling heavy.'"

For the film's battle scenes, Paul Dehn and director J. Lee Thompson later confirmed that old TV footage of the Watts riots in Los Angeles during August, 1965 served as allegorical inspiration for the violent clashes between ape and humans.

For some of the actors in **CONQUEST**, the biggest battle was finding their roles. Lou Wagner was slated for an extensive supporting role as Caesar's

henchman, but a production meeting slashed the budget and his part along with it. "I only did two things: I stole some knives and started the restaurant on fire," he said.

Buck Kartalian's character met a similar fate. "The director, J. Lee Thompson, called me and said he wanted me in the film. So I got the script and I couldn't find the part. I'm looking through the pages, going, 'Where the hell am I?' I eventually played a gorilla named Frank. Thompson told me to light the cigarettes of two women in a restaurant. I did that and was never called back. That was my part."

The low budget also couldn't afford composers Jerry Goldsmith or Leonard Rosenman, so a young and promising 24-year old jazz saxophonist, who was also a television composer, snatched the job. Arriving on the project, Tom Scott discovered that the film had already been completed and edited. "I wish I had been given the time, budget, and orchestra size to experiment on a grander scale," he noted. "But of course, I got the job because they didn't have the time, budget, or orchestra."

Scott confirmed that **CONQUEST** originally had a more violent climax. Along the way, he lost a seven-minute cut, *Revolution*, which has been restored to the new **Conquest/Battle** CD soundtrack release. "The Don Murray character [Governor Breck] was brutally beaten to death by the ape mob at the end," recalled Scott. "The movie previewed in this form and the studio had second thoughts about the ending. They filmed a 'softer' ending, cut it into the picture, and added Jerry Goldsmith's music [from **PLANET**] because I had not written music appropriate for such an ending. I'm sure they didn't want any additional expense by bringing the orchestra back."

"I thought the original ending was much truer to the story. The apes were

totally justified in killing this brutal bastard. The ending really seems tacked on. Overall, I like the film. Some of it looks a little cheesy. I wish I would have been given the time to mix the music a little more carefully. I am surprised that there is interest in this third sequel to the original, but I am pleased to be associated with a small slice of film music history."

Don Murray also has fond memories of the film. "Roddy and I were old friends. We met during his 'days of struggle,' when he was attempting to make the transition from child star to mature actor. If you watch closely, you can see the sly interplay between us—two old friends matching wits—especially in the dictionary scene, where Caesar chooses his name."

During lunch breaks, Murray recalled, "I had great fun chewing down thick sandwiches in front of Roddy while his ape makeup confined him to sipping liquid food through a straw."

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES benefited from a strong TV advertising campaign, and was successful enough (eight million dollars). **BATTLE**, the last of the APES saga, went into production in early 1973.

Battle for the PLANET OF THE APES

The early publicity for the final sequel announced it would be called **COLONIZATION OF THE PLANET OF THE APES**. Paul Dehn wrote a first draft but studio executives found it too similar to **BENEATH**. Arthur Jacobs wanted it more family oriented, and William and Joyce Corrington (fresh from their success with Charlton Heston's **THE OMEGA MAN**) were brought in. "Arthur Jacobs hated the on-going sequels," Joyce Corrington recalled. "He had blown up the planet at the end of the second film to avoid that, but it did so well the studio told him to figure a way around it—thus the time travel in the third film. When we came aboard, it had already been decided that **BATTLE** would be the last movie since there was already a television series in the works."

The Corringtons kept Dehn's timeline (a few years after Earth

WORLD OUT OF BALANCE: Charlton Heston demonstrates to Maurice Evans the pecking order on Earth, from the original **PLANET OF THE APES**.



has been taken over by apes). The simians now preside over the demoralized humans and live in treehouses. The benevolent Caesar has a wife and a young son, Cornelius. Corrington recalled Dehn's script had Caesar acting as a Roman emperor. "It didn't work to have the apes go immediately into decadence, so we used none of his material," she said. "Neither Bill nor I had seen any of the earlier films, so when we were to fly out to Hollywood to talk to Jacobs, I asked people about them. I gathered that what was most likable about the apes was their innocence (kids seemed to identify with them as opposed to the bad, grown-up humans). Jacobs later told us that when they previewed CONQUEST it had the apes smashing their rifle butts on the humans and killing them. The preview audience *hated* this so they created a new ending, with a voice-over explaining how the apes will forgive their former masters. This suggested to me that the apes should be in a 'Garden of Eden,' thus the treehouses. The theme should be the loss of innocence, an Abel/Cain story of the first ape-killing ape."

"The difference in style between BATTLE and the others is due to the difference in writers. Bill and I were more interested in character and relationships. One of the best characters, in my opinion, was the old orangutan (Lew Ayres), who kept the key to the weapons storage building. He personified wisdom, keeping the weapons of mass destruction under control, but Aldo (our Cain), who was barely literate and not in control of his emotions, subdued him."

BATTLE starred Roddy McDowall, Natalie Trundy, and Claude Akins, and included some offbeat casting choices (singer Paul Williams as the wise orangutan Virgil; John Huston as the orangutan Lawgiver). There was also some downright weird casting, with director John Landis as a wild-lager, and writer David Gerrold—who had novelized Battle

for paperback—as an ape. BATTLE resembled a TV movie, lacking the scope and excitement of the previous films.

"We thought the film was rather shoddy," said Corrington. "There was a lack of interest in it by production that showed. Jacobs just wanted to be done with it." The ending also inspired debate. As the Lawgiver concludes his story, we see ape and human



THE MEN BEHIND THE MONKEYS: John Chamber's original makeup effects won an Academy Award (above). LEFT: Baker demonstrates his technique for the new film at ShowWest.

children sitting together. The Lawgiver speaks of Caesar's hope that humans and apes will someday coexist. But a closeup of Caesar's statue reveals a tear streaming down its face. It's an ending not in the Corrington script. "We hated that ending. It belongs to Gothic fiction. You have to ask whoever decided to do that what they meant, but it does seem to say that the mistakes made in the second film will be made again."

Battle's budget was scaled to under two million dollars, and it made a modest profit at the box office. Looking back on the sustained success of the films, Corrington said, "I am astonished that the five ape films have sustained so much interest. Eric Greene, who was doing a Ph.D. dissertation on the series, contacted me a few years ago, and later published his dissertation as a book. His thesis was that the films portrayed racism in America. Maybe, but I never really thought so. If anything, I would say the three types of apes represented the id, ego, and superego of the human personality."

The Television Series

As filming wrapped on BATTLE, Jacobs turned his atten-



tion to outlining a TV series. His sudden death in 1973

seemingly ended any series. However, when the first PLANET movie racked up a 60 share on CBS in September, 1973, executives cried for an APES series. Anthony Wilson, who had developed THE INVADERS and LAND OF THE GIANTS, was commissioned to devise an APES TV format. Art Wallace, co-creator of DARK SHADOWS, scripted the first two episodes.

Ron Harper and James Naughton were cast, respectively, as astronauts Virdon and Burke. Roddy McDowall played the curious chimpanzee Galen, who is branded a fugitive by ape culture after he saves the astronauts' lives. In pursuit of the trio each week was the gorilla, Urko (Mark Lenard).

The stories were well-worn variations. "The show would have been better if we had had more interesting stories like 'The Legacy' [where Burke and Galen accessed a recorded message from long-dead scientists]," said Ron Harper. "For instance, say [there is] a storyline where a rescue expedition from Earth tries to find us. That would have been different. The writing wasn't very imaginative. I recall one

episode called "The Good Seeds," where I taught ape farmers how to grow corn. It was very warm and humanistic but it wasn't what our viewers wanted to see."

The first episode placed in the top thirty Nielsen ratings, with a 18.5 rating. Ordinarily, it would have been a good debut but disappointed executives saw it as a far cry from the 35 rating numbers scored by the feature films. For the second week, Apes placed number 43, with a weak 16.7 rating. The drop continued, and the last four episodes scraped the Nielsen cellar with an abysmal 12.0 rating. The show was a favorite of children aged two to twelve, but CBS research showed it died with older audiences. CBS wasted no time in announcing PLANET's cancellation.

APES' final incarnation was aimed at its strongest demographic group: the six- to twelve-year-olds. NBC had had success turning live-action shows (STAR TREK, EMERGENCY) into cartoon series for its Saturday morning line-up. RETURN TO THE PLANET OF THE APES was aired from September 1975 to September 1976, produced by David H. DePatie and Frit Freleng. There were 13 episodes of the show, but when STAR WARS took the country by storm in 1977, the rolling wheels of the APES franchise came to a complete stop.

J.P.3

Come Back to Isla Sorna, Where Dinosaurs Run Free and "Human Condition" is Synonymous with "Open Buffet"

By Denise Dumars

JURASSIC PARK III. Who knew? Mum certainly has been the word about the highly anticipated sequel to JURASSIC PARK and THE LOST WORLD. Few inklings about the film—and its news dinosaurs—have appeared in the press. The sequel is said to be based on an idea by Steven Spielberg, who helmed the previous two films, adapted from Michael Crichton novels.

While critical reaction to THE LOST WORLD, also called JURASSIC PARK II, was mixed, most fans would agree that the original JURASSIC PARK was a fabulously fun film. Starring Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Richard Attenborough and Jeff Goldblum, JURASSIC PARK set the standard for special effects. It also made history: A dinosaur movie with an A-list cast. Jeff Goldblum reprised his JP role in THE LOST WORLD, and Sam Neill and Laura Dern will reprise their performances in JP3.

Spielberg brought in director Joe John-

ston for the third feature. "Steven called me up and said, 'You wanna do JURASSIC PARK III?' and I said, 'Sure!'" said Joe Johnston. But Johnston is no stranger to genre and effects films; he has previously helmed JUMANJI, HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS and THE ROCKETEER, among others.

When asked about the lack of press coverage so far, Johnston responded, "That's a good thing, isn't it?" When told we had to resort to the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) for background information, he laughed, "Never believe them. There are movies in there that they say I've worked on that I've never even heard of!"

The listing *did* reveal the stars of the film, including the return of Sam Neill as Dr. Alan Grant and Laura Dern as Dr. Ellie Sattler. The supporting cast includes the equally stellar William H. Macy, Téa Leoni, John Diehl, Michael Jeter, and Bruce A. Young. Set on the island used for breeding dinosaurs—the same island that was the setting for THE LOST WORLD—JURAS-

SIC PARK III promises even more thrills and dinosaurs than the previous entries in the series.

IMDB credits John August and Peter Buchman with the screenplay. "Buchman will probably end up getting sole credit," said Johnston. "The Writer's Guild will determine who gets credit."

The setting will not be unfamiliar to JP fans. "This is set on Site B, the second island, the same island that the second film took place on," Johnston explained. "Site B was the factory and Site A was the showroom, as they said in JURASSIC PARK. What has been happening on Site B is that the dinosaurs have been allowed to breed unencumbered by human interference. So nature is taking its course there."

Site B is a no-fly zone, but in JP3 some people violate the taboo. "Once you're on the island, you're in trouble," Johnston explained. "The story is a rescue mission. It's just that a certain member of the rescue mission doesn't know that's what it is."

Locations for JP3 were set in Hawaii,





GREET THE DAY WITH A SMILE:
Rovner, nastier dinosaurs await a
chance to chow down on returning
humans in JURASSIC PARK III.

not necessarily as idyllic a location as one might presume. "Like any filmmaking experience, it was pretty much a living hell while we were doing it," said Johnston. "We weren't there for a vacation. We were there because it looks like an island in the Pacific. We were only in Hawaii for four weeks; a lot of the filming took place back in L.A. in a huge sound studio, or on the back lot at Universal."

Though artistic license has been taken to some extent, there are no fictional dinosaurs in the film. "All the dinosaurs that you will see in the film are based on scientific fact. And there are some cool dinosaurs," Johnston said. "The raptors are back, and the T-Rex, and our new big heavy is Spinosaurus. Spinosaurus was discovered in the late 1800s. I believe. There was one really good fossil skeleton of him, and it was destroyed during WWII in the bombing of a museum in Germany. That was the only example that anyone had. They have since discovered new remains of Spinosaurus. He was larger than T-Rex; the largest example they've found would've been 56 feet long. What gives him the advantage over T-Rex are his arms—he has eight-foot long arms that would have been a definite advantage in acquiring his food source. And being the new heavy, we had to have him meet up with the old heavy."

Any flying dinos in the roster? "All kinds of new dinos. Though, strictly speaking, flying reptiles are not dinosaurs. Pteranodon is in the film. He's huge; they had up to a 35-foot wing span. The Pterodactyl, on the other hand, only had about an 18-inch wing span."

"I hesitate to say it's non-stop action, because that would mean that the human story is downplayed, and I think that there is a very compelling human story in this film. It involves this rescue mission and it involves parents rescuing their child. But it's also about the interplay of several relationships during the course of the adventure, which takes place over a period of a few days. There certainly is a lot of action, and there are a lot of great action sequences and effects sequences, but I would have to disagree that it's non-stop action."

"The humans are the heroes here...with a little help from the dinosaurs. I don't want to give too much away. There are people who you want to smack, and people who get smacked." Not surprisingly, there are people who don't get out of the film in one piece. "Isn't that why people go to these sorts of movies?" asked Johnston. "I mean, who would not want to see somebody eaten by a dinosaur? I know I would!"

Apparently, the director considers human-munching a just reward for all the effort he's gone through. "I've been working on this film for two years now," said Johnston. "One of the reasons I like this business is that I can take lots of time off. And I'm going to take plenty. Steven warned me

about it; he said these movies are hard to make. And I really didn't know what he was talking about until I made this movie."

"It was grueling. Just the logistics of trying to combine all these elements: the animatronics and the CGI and the locations... ILM is finishing up their shots and every few days we get a new batch of those and cut 'em in and discuss what works and what doesn't and why. You go out on location and you shoot a plate with nothing in the background, with the actors reacting to it—and which they are really good at. I have to say, I guess that's what acting is all about. They're really convincing."

Johnston has worked on effects films before, but none as arduous as JP3. "I've put a lot of pressure on myself. Steven Spielberg created this great franchise, and here I am doing the third installment, and that's a lot of pressure. I want it to be as good as it can be, and at the same time, I want it to be a sequel to the other two. I don't want people to say, 'Whoa, that's not Jurassic Park.' While it's certainly my film, I am giving myself a lot of restrictions. I'm aware of what Steven did in the first two and I'm interpreting that style to adapt to the way I'm doing it."

Spielberg maintained a modest presence on the JP3 set. "He visited a few times," Johnston said. "He came by on days when we were doing animatronic stuff with Winston's dinosaurs, and he always left saying, 'Wow, I'm glad I'm not doing this stuff!'"

A lot of the magic was created right here in Hollywood. "We created a river on the backlot in Hollywood. And, with a little help from ILM, it looks like a huge river, like the Colorado."

As to the division of special effects, Johnston estimated it as, "Stan Winston Studios sixty percent, CGI about forty percent. I played a little trick on ILM. I'm aware that you can always tell the difference between the CGI and animatronics, so in many shots I would include an animatronic dinosaur in the shot, in the plate, so that when ILM is putting in the CG they would have to match the look of the animatronic."

Indeed, Johnston's attention to detail has helped to create a new level of effects film for others to live up to. "The cues that tell you you're looking at a living creature are tiny ones," the director noted. "Eye movements, the movement of a nostril, things like that. We really tried to get in and do

close-up stuff of subtle movements like that. I told them up-front, 'I'm going to go in really close, so spend the extra time and money and make sure those eyelids are going to hold up with the camera two feet away.' They really pulled it off."

But why make another JURASSIC PARK movie? What does this film have that the other two don't? "I think it's quite a bit darker than the other two, tonally. It'll be PG-13, though. There's no way a movie like this could be R. You'd throw away more than half of your audience."

"I think the franchise is alive and well. By the time the film comes out it will have been four years since the last one. I think Steven Spielberg has always intended for there to be three films."

If number four would come along, would Johnston be willing to helm it? "I think I'd let someone else have this much fun," he said. "I mean, I don't wanna hog all the fun..."

Dr. Alan Grant, paleontologist. The role is familiar for him.



JURASSIC PARK, where award-winning actor Sam Neill played the heroic, intellectual, and child-ambivalent scientist who saves the day for the Park's first guests.

Sam Neill has dazzled genre film audiences in such films as IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS, MERLIN, and of course, JURASSIC PARK. He is also noted for his fine work in such mainstream films as THE PIANO and THE HORSE WHISPERER.

and is the recipient of many awards, including Britain's O.B.E. for Service to Acting.

Neill was reprising his role from the first film. Why do the third? "I was talked into it!" he laughed. "By the producers. Primarily, I'm glad I did. I enjoyed it. It was good fun."

But Neill was not the only one returning from the first film. "Well, there's me and the T-Rex, and Laura Dern, briefly," he said. "It was nice to see Laura. She and I are good friends. The T-Rex and I, however, are not on good terms."

Neill had not worked with director Joe Johnston before. "I think he was a very good choice. He was a gas to work with. He's unflappable,

lucid imagination for all of this! We could all sleep safer in our beds if it wasn't for

There are very few places in the world where you can do that."



The Hawaii shoot may have been uncomfortable, but was not scary. "We were on Oahu and Kauai." Did Neill see any of Kauai's legendary giant spiders while he was there? "Oh really? They have them there? That's all we would have needed." As with the last film, Dr. Grant is played as half

Stan?"

As with SUBMERGED, the submarine film he's currently making, Neill spent a lot of the time on JP3 in the wet. "I'm not at liberty to say if I make it out of this film alive, but I will say that I got well and truly trashed." Why a third film in the first place? "The basic premise is that now these [Jurassic Park] islands are off limits to everyone.

But of course there is a certain amount of fly-by tourism that pushes the envelope a little bit, and a

scientist and half action hero. "The thing about Grant is that he's always half horrified and half-fascinated by the situation. He's been developing new theories; he's still digging, and he's developed new ideas about velociraptor behavior. That's not why they've got him along; they think he knows his way around the island. But they're on the wrong island—so he doesn't know anything more than they do!"

"There's a little bit of back-story in the beginning of the film." He won't say, however, anything about Dr. Grant's relationship with Dr. Sattler, the character played by Laura Dern. "Oh, I can't tell you about that; it's a surprise. She doesn't go with him to the island, but she's there until the end of the film."

How do they get Dr. Grant to go to the island? "There's no way he'd go near it willingly. It's a completely nefarious ruse that they use to get him to the island. It's an abomination, really."

Téa Leoni's and William H. Macy's characters are on the island with Neill's. To say that he's really upset with them "would be a gross understatement" Neill explained. After all, Leoni and Macy play a wealthy couple who have gotten themselves in big trouble by flying to the island. "It depends on how you see them; you might see them as anxious parents, or you might see them as damned fools."

"We're on the breeder island. We come across some rather unpleasant relics of Genetech's glory days. They weren't doing very nice things at all, really," he said of the film's fictional company that developed the dinosaurs featured in JURASSIC PARK.

Six will fans be excited by the new film? "There were several on the crew who had worked on all three films and felt this was the best of them...I think you'll have fun. We certainly did."



I WANTED TO CHECK OUT THAT EXCITING PENGUIN EXHIBIT AT SEA-WORLD, BUT NOOOO...! Sam Neill's Dr. Alan Grant is flanked by clueless tourists William H. Macy and Téa Leoni (above); reluctant scientist dragooned into an ill-fated rescue mission. FAR LEFT: Visual effects supervisor Jim Mitchell (top) consults with director Joe Johnston.

greatly intelligent, with a mischievous sense of fun. That's what this film needed: a mischievous mind behind it."

Neill, who has done quite a number of films that might be labeled "independent" or even (gasp!) "serious," does not feel that he's slumming when he appears in genre films. "I enjoy being in them. I was always quite a fan of the genre anyway. I worked with John Carpenter twice. I'm quite fond of John; he's also got a pretty naughty twinkle in his eye as well, which is appropriate."

Since he brought up his rocky relationship with T-Rex, I asked him about other dinosaurs in the film. "Yes, there are several new dinosaurs in this film, including some that fly. There are some pretty nasty creatures at work in this one," I mentioned Stan Winston and he said, "I blame Stan and his

ple of people go missing, including a kid. The parents of this kid dupe my character into getting back onto that island, which is the last place Grant wants to be. So it's me, one of my colleagues, played by Alessandro Nivola, the parents, played by Téa Leoni and William Macy, and we have a hand of mercenaries with us. As always, anything that can go wrong will go wrong. It's a chaotic universe on those islands."

"It's a strong cast and a strong story; an amazing, percussive kind of ride. We were in Hawaii again, and at Universal. I like Hawaii...It gives me an opportunity to get out my ukulele without being laughed at.

JURASSIC PARK III

SPECIAL EFFECTS

With the Help of Computers and Hydraulics,
Giants Once Again Walk the Earth

By Denise Dumars

Bigger, wilder, more exotic, and more sophisticated...this is what audiences will expect from the special effects in the third installment of the wildly successful JURASSIC PARK franchise. What can you do when your audience yawns at CGI and sees T-Rex as an old friend rather than a terrifying monster? Improve the effects, with the end result of hopefully both scaring and impressing the audience.

Blending animatronic effects with CGI is one audacious move that should result in impressive visuals. Director Joe Johnston explained the process: "First I get a look at what ILM

has done. Then I send it to Stan Winston to coordinate. Then I get it back, see if the CGI matches the animatronics, send it back to ILM..." Such is the challenge of incorporating different types of special effects—from advanced CGI to Winston Studio's animatronics to costumed actors—into the action of the film.

"Oh, that's the tricky part, that's for sure," said Jim Mitchell, visual effects supervisor for JURASSIC PARK III. "But we've

done it before."

Mitchell has made his mark on great genre films such as SLEEPY HOLLOW, MARS ATTACKS!, DEATH BECOMES HER, TERMINATOR 2 and the original JURASSIC PARK. In the continuation of the franchise based on Michael Crichton's bestselling novels, Mitchell has the challenge of trying to dazzle audiences once again. "This is the third film in

the dinosaurs into the environments and making them look believable in that sense, whether the creature is in water or against a foggy background or whatever. We have to make them look like they're standing on that same ground that the actors are standing on."

Mitchell is excited about the project. "I think it's going to be different from the other two films. We're bringing a couple

of new dinosaurs into the mix; in the process of doing that, Joe's going to be taking us into different parts of the Jurassic Park world. I think it's going to be quite an exciting chase movie."

THE EFFECTS SPECIALISTS ARE HERE. NOW WE DIE: Doing JURASSIC PARK for a third time meant giving the dino a more convincing musculature (below) and pulling out the motion control rig for a dramatic plane crash (MC cameraman Bob Hill at work on right)



which we've done the process of working with Stan's mechanical dinosaurs and combining theirs with ours. The unique thing with these movies is that we're putting both types of dinosaurs in the same shot. We're meticulously trying to match the look. Obviously we can do so much more with ours, but we're also trying to make them look as cool as Stan's designs.

"Now we're in the process of animating and lighting and putting

If it takes a village to raise a child, then it must take at least that to nurture a flock of dinosaurs to robust, carnivorous maturity. "I'm the visual effects supervisor," said Mitchell, "and Dan Taylor is the animation supervisor. Then there's the rest of the huge crew working on this. We're certainly into the hundreds of workers on this project, and we have to be done by the end of June."

The Spinosaurus is the signature dinosaur of the new film. "As far as the effects go, it's very much like what we've done with the T-Rex," Mitchell said. "Stan's guys built the mechanical version, but we've got

the full-body Spinosaurus that can actually walk and move around. His is strictly for the close-ups and interacting with various parts of the set. Where we take over—very much like in the other movies—is where they're using their mechanical T-Rex but ours you can see from the feet up. In fact, theirs doesn't even have a tail!" He laughed. "Ours can run and walk and chase. Spinosaurus is a meaner, hadder, scarier dinosaur than T-Rex."

Other new species make their debuts as well. "We certainly added a few dinosaurs into the mix, but a lot of that comes from Joe working with Stan's group. They usually get on board before us with their designers. We've got to match what they come up with, so we'll take a lot of photos for reference and measurements and stuff like that."

"Jack Horner, the paleontologist, is the consultant on this. But everyone brings his own vision of dinosaurs to the film, so there are some liberties taken on these things. There are a few dinosaurs we've built up from scratch. We talk to the paleontologists, have them visit, and we've got people on the crew who are just dinosaur nuts, so they're very critical about making sure that these things look the way they should."

The big experts in the audience will be kids, and they'll be the first to know if Mitchell, Winston, et al have portrayed the dinosaurs incorrectly. "That's right," Mitchell said. "That's who we're making movies for—the kids."

"The cool thing about it for me—and I worked on the first one, so I'll say it again—is the challenge of not repeating ourselves. I think we won't repeat ourselves, considering the variety of dinosaurs and the different environments in which we will take them. And, yes, it's going to be a bit edgier than the earlier films."

JP3 sounds like more of an action film than its predecessors.

"Yeah, I think so. It's a bit of an action, chase film: dinosaurs against the people, and vice versa."

The level of complexity of the ILM effects definitely ups the ante on this



film. "I think we've probably got as many shots in this film as we did in the last two films combined, so that's an indication of how heavy our involvement is," Mitchell said. "New dinosaurs, and like I said, we're doing a lot more stuff with the environment, putting the characters and the dinosaurs into new environments that we haven't done in the last two movies. That's been a lot of work in addition to just doing the dinosaurs, and making sure the dinosaurs interact with their environments."

CGI has come a long way since the first film. "Oh, yes, I worked on the first film, and just in the seven or eight years since then, just the detail we're putting into the dinosaurs has changed. For instance, we're building the underlying muscle and fat structures of the dinosaurs, so that when they move we're not just taking into account that they're moving bones, but all the rest of the body as well. That stuff is a very critical part of what we're doing now."

That level of detail has called for a long-term commitment. "I've worked on the film since August of 2000. It'll be about a year from when we started to when we finish. They shot for about five months. In



IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE SILICON AND LATEX CAN LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE: It fell to visual effects supervisor Jim Mitchell (left) to implement director Joe Johnston's plan of incorporating effects from both ILM and Stan Winston Studios in one shot.

the initial stages you're just building the creatures. Until the sequences start getting edited, you're just doing a little R & D stuff until you can start putting the dinosaurs into the film."

Scientific accuracy sometimes had to take a back seat to visual impact. "We took liberties and changed the size of some of our dinosaurs. There's scientific data that we start with, but a lot of what works depends on what looks cool. Should it be bigger to look more frightening, or stay the size it is? We took liberties depending on what worked in the film."

Universal is in Hollywood and ILM is in Marin County in Northern California, so the intense back-and-forth necessary to pull off this filmic feat involved some travel. "We're in conference with Joe Johnston two or three times a week and he comes up here and we go down there and it's definitely a back and forth process."

Tea Leoni commented on the hilarity of having to act terrified of a "guy in a plaid shirt waving a stick" who was standing in for the T-Rex. "It is a tricky thing the actors to do, but that's what they're paid for," Mitchell said. "That's what actors are good at; it's as much a part of acting as anything else, and if they've done it effectively, you'll never know the difference."

Mitchell is so focused on finishing this film that he won't even talk about what comes

next for him at ILM. "I'm just trying to make sure this all works out all right," he said. It's a lot of responsibility, and he doesn't underestimate the sophistication of his audience, however young they may be, for a moment.

John Rosengrant will answer to it. "Dino-Man," said the member of the Stan Winston Studios. "Animatronic effects supervisor is my official title, however."

Rosengrant was Effects Supervisor on *THE LOST WORLD* and a puppeteer on the original *JURASSIC PARK*. His other major titles include alien creator on *ALIEN NATION* and—our personal favorite—Gnom wrangler on *A GNOME NAMED GNOM*. His current work on *JURASSIC PARK III* took him even deeper into the wonderful world of dinosaurs and their kin.

This time it's not just about T-Rex. There are a lot of new dinosaurs in the film, and Rosengrant is eager to talk about one spectacular example. "There's a big new bad guy called Spinosaurus," he said. "He's bigger than T-Rex. Jack Horner, who is the paleontologist who was helping us in the early stages and giving us information, was saying that the Spinosaurus is a true predator. In his mind, the T-Rex was a big scavenger—like a hyena or something—that would come in, scare off things, and clean up the carcasses."

"Horner believes this because of the design of T-Rex's jaw and his lack of front arms. He also has a bone-crushing formation to his jaw, whereas the Spinosaurus has a crocodile-like head, enormous front arms, and big, attacking claws on those hands. They could grow up to sixty feet long."

This fearsome predator got the royal treatment from the effects team. "The one that we made for the movie is in theory about forty-four feet long. We did a full animatronic Spinosaurus, about two-thirds of him, from about the base of his tail forward and then from the knees up. And then we created some other pieces, like a leg—insert leg, insert arms and head as well—but it was a fully hydraulic, fast-moving dinosaur. Our animatronic one weighed 24,000 lbs. It would pull a couple of G's from its extreme head movement—all the way right or left, as fast as it would go. It had about a thousand horsepower behind it. It was really powerful, really quick."

ILM has been working on the film for over a year, so has Stan Winston Studios. "We started some sketches in December of '99 and we had Spinosaurus finished in October of 2000. So it's actually a shorter time frame than we've had in the past for creating a big dinosaur like that from scratch."

The technology used to create such marvels marches on. "We incorporate some of the technology from the previous

movies, but we also came up with some new things. The Spinosaurus is sort of a hot-rodded version of the old T-Rex from the other movies. Bigger cylinders, more horsepower to get more speed and strength out of him. One of the fellas who [works with us] is called Tim Nordella, and he was one of the chief engineers for the mechanics of the Spinosaurus. Joey Orosco was the head sculptor on him, but there was also a big huge team of people working on him. Approximately 75 to 80 people worked on the different dinosaurs."

T-Rex, while not the big cheese anymore, still gets his day in the sun. "We brought back the T-Rex, who was essentially the male T-Rex from LOST WORLD. We had to tune him up a bit," Rosengrant laughed. "Then we redid raptors. We had a hydraulic male and female raptor, and we had a couple of suit versions, which I actually climbed into. I am Dino-Man and Raptor-Man!"

"We had some insert heads and things. We were a little disappointed when we heard we were doing raptors again. Not that they aren't cool, but we were thinking, *oh*—hoping for something new. But then we all put our heads together and said, *You know what? As these things are scripted, they are evolving. So why don't we still make it cost-effective—utilize most of the body sculpted as before—but change his head and her head?* We went through and

changed the coloration and added these cool things growing off the head that look very bird-like. There is the theory that dinosaurs evolved into birds. So we got to reinvent the raptors."

Paleontologist Jack Horner was once again consulted. "There were discussions with Jack, and we had also read some other books. There was another paleontologist who came by with fossil castings of small velociraptors—*really* small ones, a foot or two tall. They almost looked like they were getting feathers on them, these quill-like items. We wove that into the look of our raptors."

Skin, however, doesn't fossilize well, so coloration is hard to determine on dinosaurs. "Our approach is that we go through vast libraries of nature books. We start to think what would be plausible, what could we get away with? For example, the coral snake is very brightly colored, whereas other poisonous snakes aren't. You sort of borrow and steal from different things and weave it into something that looks plausible; not only believable, but visually exciting too. There's no steadfast scientific research that we're going on; it's the coolness factor!"

Herds of herbivorous dinosaurs were added mostly by ILM's CGI effects. "We didn't really build any of those for this film. We were doing all the bad guys, it seems like. We opened with Pteranodons. Pteranodons are major, major characters in this film. We did five baby Pteranodon puppets that work inside of a nest and attack one of the actors in the movie. And we also built an adult. It was a suit worn by one of our guys here, and it was used for some of the close-up effects."

Technically speaking, the

Pterosaurs were not dinosaurs, but were closely related to them. "The Pteranodon was a pretty big animal. It had, I believe, a thirty-five foot wing span. It was tough to create that; it had its wings in a folded configuration...on the ground, walking. To see that walking toward you was really creepy—like a giant bat folded up."

Rosengrant summarized the Stan Winston Studios contribution to the new film: "We did the raptors, the Pteranodons with the babies in a nest on a rocky outcropping. We did some designs for an ankylosaur, so he should make an appearance in the film, but I think he's going to be computer-generated."

As noted before, some of the animatronics are in the same scenes as the CGI effects. "There's a lot of that going on," Rosengrant said, "which I think is terrific. Our raptors are in the scene, and then the CGI creatures are running and jumping all around them. I think it will make an even more seamless blend of the CGI and the animatronics."

But even though the CGI is more advanced, blending the digital with the physical remains a daunting task. "I think it's going to be great, because what I've seen of it looks pretty cool to me," Rosengrant said. "There were scenes where my Spinosaurus left off and they added on to it with CGI."

But sometimes the old-fashioned "man-in-a-costume" can't be substituted. "There's a

THE KIND OF STUFF YOU WON'T FIND ON EBAY: ILM sequence supervisor Chris White checks out the overbite on one of Isla Nublar's nastier residents.



scene with Spinosaurus smashing something, and it's my leg [in the suit] contacting with a physical prop and crushing it, and it blends off into the rest of the dinosaur in CGI. There's no faking something being crushed! And yet the CGI fills in what we couldn't provide. Joe Johnston is a major artist and he was really into the dinosaurs."

How was it working with director Joe Johnston? "It was

with this movie in January I'd been on it for over a year. ILM will be on it forever as well! You pour a lot into it to make it happen, to make it come to fruition. A whole crew devoted an



GUESSING GAME: Director Joe Johnston was determined to complicate the audience's ability to distinguish between computer-generated dinosaurs and those sharing lens-time with the human performers.

terrific. It felt like working with one of us. He's an artist—he loves sketching, and there were many times we sat there with colored pencils figuring out color ideas. He truly seemed to enjoy helping to create the dinosaurs. It's so great when you show up on the set and see the mutual creation. There's something really fun about that."

In the end, Rosengrant was able to reflect on the effort it took to pull JURASSIC PARK III together. "When I got done

entire year to dinosaurs.

"I've worked on all three JURASSIC PARK pictures. At first, I thought, 'Oh, what are we going to do differently on the third one? We have to try to top what we've done in the past.' At the very least you have to make it as cool, but as an artist you want to strive to do something better, so it's upping the ante. Things start to come to you: let's revamp the raptors, make more exciting color schemes, and so forth. Then you

see pieces of the script come through and you see a lot of energy went into it. It has a bit of a life of its own, this movie. It has a different air about it, which may be a really good thing."

People don't want to see just another remake of Jurassic Park, however. "We love the others; people, dinosaurs, screaming, getting eaten..." He laughed. "But you do want to put a different spin on it, from the story aspect. A different approach. And I think that's been

series of cable movies called CREATURE FEATURES.

"CREATURE FEATURES has five films in a series. Lou Arkoff is the producer, the son of Samuel Arkoff, who made all those great old movies like I WAS A TEENAGE CAVE-MAN, EARTH VS. THE SPIDER, THE SHE-CREATURE, and all that. We're reusing the titles, and the idea is to come up with new stories that use the old titles. We're having fun. That's for sure."

done."

The film reportedly has a darker tone and a more frightening look. "I agree," Rosengrant said. "I think it's a little darker but I don't think it goes too far. It's a little more menacing and exotic."

"And some people do get eaten by dinosaurs." Good!

Rosengrant and the Stan Winston team are now working on a remake of THE TIME MACHINE—directed by Simon Wells, the great-grandson of H.G. Wells—and a

If you looked back at the last decade of American feature animation—focusing on traditional, cel animation—the concerted effort to push the medium past fairy tales and animal stories becomes readily evident. We've had films take on ambitious subjects and epic canvases, with nods to live-action directors from Lean to Spielberg. No longer does every cartoon feature need fluffy bunnies or anthropomorphized bluebirds, nor do they need good or bad fairies, child protagonists, or singing princesses. They don't need songs at all, as a matter of fact. What on Earth are things coming to?

What they're coming to is ATLANTIS: THE LOST EMPIRE, the new animated feature from Walt Disney. A fantasy-adventure about the

search for the mythic lost continent, the film promises to open new realms in animated entertainment. "The film feels different in terms of the story, the saturation of color, the size of the Cinemascope screen," said producer Don Hahn, who previously produced LION KING, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, and executive produced THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE. "At the same time, we're standing on the shoulders of our Disney predecessors, passing what we learn from film to film. For example, ATLANTIS combines a tremendous number of modern digital effects with a hand-drawn tradition going back to SNOW WHITE and beyond."

"A lot of the time a medium can be mistaken for a genre. We wanted to explore the animation medium. Instead of going down Main Street and through the castle to Fantasyland, where we've been many times before (and thankfully so), we thought we'd make a turn left and go into Adventureland and have some fun there. We wanted to make a big, wide-screen epic in animation. If we only stick to making fairy-tales, eventually the animated form will wither and die."

Directors Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale, who previously collaborated on BEAUTY AND HUNCHBACK, agreed. "I've never believed in the view that animated films should be exclusively about animal characters," said Wise, noting that live-actioners like BABE have encroached on

this area. "We have to extend animation beyond fairy-tales and musicals." Given that their previous films have strong human protagonists, are the days numbered for anthropomorphic characters? Trousdale didn't think so. "Kirk and I tend to lean toward human-centered drama, but you'll find

But all is not as it seems. "It turns out Milo is in the basement of the Smithsonian, and presenting his 'proposal' to mummies and other museum artifacts. He thinks he's on the edge of a big break, and will get the funding to prove the whereabouts of Atlantis, but his real presentation is disastrous." Milo's bombastic boss, Fenton Harcourt, is voiced by David Ogden Stiers, best known to the public as Major Charles Emerson Winchester in M.A.S.H. and whose Disney roles included Cogsworth in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and Governor Ratcliffe in POCAHONTAS.

Dismissed as a crank, poor Milo's dreams come crashing down—until he finds himself summoned to the home of eccentric billionaire Preston B. Whitmore. (FRASIER's John Mahoney). Whitmore, a Howard Hughes-type

recluse, shows Milo the fabled Shepherd's Journal, an ancient text found by Milo's grandfather. The book unlocks the secrets Milo has long been searching for. Whitmore is financing an expedition, and Milo is needed for his language expertise. In short order, Milo is aboard a submarine. Destination: Atlantis.

How would the directors describe Milo? "He's smart and extremely knowledgeable," said Wise, "but also very inept. He's brilliant at what he does, but at the same time he's what a lot of people would call a complete prat! But from the outset we see his enthusiasm and passion, waiting to be mobilized. His story is a classic hero's journey, in which this gawky and inept person turns into a great leader." Is Milo a break with past Disney heroes? "Yes and no. He's not a person to look out of a window and snoop about his problems. He's emphatically a 'can-do' character, extremely impulsive

and enthusiastic, leaping before he looks. He doesn't pine for acceptance, or have crises of confidence, but he does have a huge dream and needs the right circumstances to realize it."

Why the 1914 setting? According to Hahn, "We wanted a time just before the outbreak of world war... A society that was still largely agrarian, yet also highly industrialized, and in some ways rather innocent. There was a real hope that

The Princess Doesn't Sing. The Animals Don't Dance. Disney Artists Throw Out the Rule Book for Their New Feature

other Disney teams still making films with animals or monsters or aliens. It's just good to be diverse."

ATLANTIS opens with a dramatic prologue set many thousands of years ago. As Wise described it, "It's a two-and-a-half minute prologue, depicting the last day of Atlantis as seen through the eyes of a four year-old girl [whom we later discover is Princess Kida—voiced by Cree Summer]. It's fast-paced, deliberately disjointed and confusing. We see glimpses of the technology, the look of Atlantis, setting the audience up for when we see the city thousands of years on. Then the story jumps to 1914. We meet Milo James Thatch, our hero [Michael J. Fox] who seems to be presenting a lecture to the Smithsonian board of directors. It's a very impressive talk, apparently showing Milo as a respected linguist. It's also a painful way of presenting our mix of history and bogus invention."

Linguist Milo J. Thatch (Michael J. Fox) meets submarine commander Rourke (James Garner), presided over by slightly dotty industrialist Preston B. Whitmore (John Mahoney).



ATLANTIS

THE LOST EMPIRE



IN THE MIDST OF LEGEND: Disney artists relied on Southeast Asian design to fashion an Atlantean society suffering the forces of entropy

technology might change everyone's lives, similar to today when people have great hopes for computer technology. We thought it was a 'sweet spot' to set our film. The landscape is all rivets and rusty sheet metal, functional rather than ornamental." As well as visiting the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, the artists toured submarines in Baltimore Harbor and went to museums to study World War I era clothes and machinery.

Art director Dave Goetz (who also worked on *HUNCHBACK*) continued, "The original idea was to set up a contrast between the high-tech, mechanical 1914 world and the more organic, magical Atlantis. So we start in a world of bolts and rivets, very 'intrusive' technology, and then take what is basically a journey to the center of the Earth to find this more organic, mystical place. As it was, the journey starts very early on in the film, so the contrast is

surrounded by water which pours endlessly into a great chasm full of lava. One idea that was clear in early drafts is that Atlantis' ecosystem depends on the balance between fire and water." Adventure movie fans will be unsurprised to hear the climax involves huge lava explosions.



Mayan pyramids, or other obvious national motifs on the architecture. Atlantis goes more for domes and 'bottle-shaped' buildings.

"There are a few wide, general shots of Atlantis," Goetz continued, "but not so many.

n't so apparent. But the submarine and other 1914 vehicles still play a major part; representatives of our high-tech world."

The thousand-foot sub (named, in suitably heroic fashion, the *Ulysses*), takes Milo and the mercenaries to the undersea entry to Atlantis. Unfortunately, there's a guard-dog, a terrible, mechanical monster called the Leviathan. Designer Matt Codd described it concisely as "huge, mechanical, and lobstersque. The idea is that it's been dormant for thousands of years, and is covered in silt and mud." The creature rips up the sub, but Milo and Co. escape into a subterranean tunnel looping under the seabed. This leads them the rest of the way to Atlantis.

And what an impressive locale it is! Atlantis, Goetz explained, sits in a gargantuan cavern. "We see it in a big 'reveal' shot, and the cavern is used through the film as a backdrop. It's dome-shaped, hollowed out by the power of Atlantean crystals when the city sank into the earth. Atlantis is

When it came to designing Atlantis, the creators wanted to steer clear of repeating past Disney films. "HERCULES had recently come out," said Goetz, "so we wanted to stay well away from Greek styling. We looked through lots of Atlantis literature, and considered related theories, like the idea of an ancient land-bridge connecting Egyptian and Mayan cultures. But in the end we discarded these ideas, and looked to South-East Asia for our influences: India, Nepal, Indonesia, Cambodia." South America and the Middle East were also part of the synthesis.

The idea, Goetz said, was that Atlantis was "one of the original cities" and hence could feature traces of different civilizations. As with real-life Egypt, the question the film asks is how could the ancients build such wonders. "We didn't just borrow from these places, though. We homogenized the designs, cross-pollinating them with basic shapes to give Atlantis a unified look. We steered away from Egyptian or

Rather, some small sets are prominent. The main example is the king's throne-room (the king is voiced by *STAR TREK* legend Leonard Nimoy). "The king's palace is at the summit of the city, a huge domed structure. The throne room is a water-garden, with foliage and waterfalls everywhere. The throne is on a kind of island in this garden. The dominant feature of the set is a giant carved head, a 'crying god,' which reflects the king's personality. Our guiding concept was of Atlantis as a city in decay, going to seed. The Atlantean crystals were supposed to sustain the welfare of the city and the people. Unfortunately, they haven't worked as well as hoped."

"The king is thousands of years old now, and the throne is his day-head," said Goetz. "When Milo and the mercenaries turn up, they're an unwelcome intrusion, upsetting his situation and forcing out his secrets." However, Milo's visit is less unwelcome for the king's daughter, Princess Kida, voiced by animation veteran Cree



AMBITIOUS VISTAS: For the first time since *THE BLACK CAULDRON*, Disney is relying on 70mm Cinemascope to capture the mammoth scope of *ATLANTIS*' underwater adventure, including the Leviathan attack at left. **BELOW:** Milo on the bridge of the *Ulysses*.

Summer (*RUGRATS*, *TEACHER'S PET*, *PINKY AND THE BRAIN*.) Intrigued by the newcomers, Kida takes Milo on a tour of the city, showing him the source of Atlantis' power. It's this power, however, that leads to conflict and brings about a cataclysmic climax.

An important sub-plot in the film involves Milo's relationship with the mercenaries on the expedition. They're a motley but effective bunch, including digging and geology expert Mole, voiced by Corey Burton. Vinny Santorini is the wisecracking demolition expert, voiced by *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*'s Don Novello, doing another take on his Father Guido Sarducci character. African-American Doctor Sweet is a fast-talking medic and the first of the mercenaries to befriend Milo. He's voiced by Phil Morris, otherwise known as *SEINFELD*'s Jackie Chiles.

Meanwhile Audrey Ramirez, voiced by Jacqueline Obradors, is the tomboy mechanic, and Mrs. Packard, voiced by *BARNEY MILLER*'s Florence Stanley, is the world-weary communications officer. In the cuisine department, Cookie is an outspoken chuckwagon chef, whose menus must be seen to be believed. Chuckie was voiced by the comedian Jim Varney, best known for his title role in the *ERNEST* comedies, and the voice of *TOY STORY*'s Slinky Dog. Sadly, Varney died in February 2000, after recording the Cookie role.

Two characters who share a particular bond are Commander Rourke, leader of the expedition, and his lieutenant, Helga Sinclair. Rourke is voiced by veteran actor James Gar-

ner. Helga Sinclair is voiced by Claudia Christian, familiar to space-opera fans as Commander Ivanova in *BABYLON 5*.

Given the presence of Nimoy and Christian, is *ATLANTIS* deliberately targeting science-fiction fans? Don Hahn disagrees. "I suppose it could look like that, but what we wanted to assemble was an interesting, eclectic team. Leonard Nimoy is obviously a big name in science fiction, but he's also an amazing vocalist. We wanted an ensemble of very talented character actors and comedians; a good balance between new talents and mature, veteran actors."

ATLANTIS has one of the biggest ensemble casts of any Disney animation. Was it hard to handle so many characters? According to Wise, "Each mercenary is a quirky individual, but they function as a unit, and they have one essential story-arc. The story involves how they go from being

simply mercenaries doing their thing to a more heroic role. From Milo's angle, it's the story of how he moves from being an outsider to someone they respect."

Wise admitted, however, that he wished he could have given more space to the mercenaries. "They were such good characters, and we wanted to have as much fun with them as we could. We wrote and recorded lots of great material that we ended up having to drop."



The characters, backgrounds, and the film's whole look reflect a new approach for Disney. Previous heavily-designed Disney features—such as *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, with its angles and verticals, and *HERCULES*, with its caricatures and caricatures—drew respectively on medieval art and Gerald Scarfe's waspish designs. For *ATLANTIS*, Wise and Trousdale turned to comic-books, and a rising star they both admired: Mike Mignola. While Mignola is modest about his direct input [see interview, page 52], his influence is shown by the fact that *ATLANTIS*' style was internally named

characters are broken into two or three hand-edged shapes with very distinct colors. Overall, colors are separated more."

Goetz is quick to add, though, that the palette is still rich. "It's not as if the viewer is going to say, 'Whoa, this film has only six colors!' You notice the sharp graphic look, not the fewer colors." Light and shadow are also crucial elements in the film. The *ATLANTIS* team went back to their basic training to relearn how vital lighting patterns and shadows are to a scene, and how they describe form and environment.

ATLANTIS is one of the few Disney an-

will be wider than their field of vision. Cinemascope is immersive, taking you into the picture."

The 1914 setting was important for designing the mermaids' vehicles. "We were trying to find a design vocabulary, a sense of the shapes appropriate to 1914," said Goetz. "I read every book I could find on the subject, but there's not much on very early technology. So I went to the Aherdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, which has a huge museum with three hundred tanks from different decades. About the first four were relevant to us. You wouldn't believe how hoxy, heavy and noisy the tanks were! But they were crudely effective."

The same clunky, overbuilt aesthetic held for the other vehicles. The mermaids bring a veritable caravan of 1914-vintage steam-powered trucks and machines. "There are many vehicles in the film, generic trucks, Mole's digging machine and so on. The designs predate any sophistication or style. The trucks, for example, have a ludicrously high center of gravity. So we concentrated on making the machines awkward but effective, with very obvious functions. It's clear the moment you see them what they're there to do."

The *Ulysses* sub was more of an anachronism. A huge vessel with many decks, a globe-like hridge, and a fluke tail, it was described by exterior designer Matt Codd as something Eiffel might have built. "It

"I based my *ATLANTIS* designs on two principles: Keep it simple, and make it look like it could work."

- Production Designer Jim Martin

"Dis-nola," Don Hahn said. "Mignola pushed us out of our comfort zone, our house style, much as Gerald Scarfe did with *HERCULES*. We try to bring in artists who will challenge us."

"Mignola emphasizes angular shapes and hard edges, and goes for a 'posterized' look," said Dave Goetz. "The film was especially inspired by German propaganda posters from World War I: simple, strong, and powerful. We came up with the term 'posterization' to describe the dark silhouette and flat color approach we wanted. Instead of lots of shapes fairly close in color values, *ATLANTIS* has relatively few shapes, far apart in value. There are fewer gradations of color on an object, and less blending of similar colors. Objects and

iminations presented in 70mm Cinemascope, a format 30 per cent bigger than standard Panavision. (Previous Disneys to receive the treatment include *LADY AND THE TRAMP*, *SLEEPING BEAUTY* and *BLACK CAULDRON*, as well as Pixar's *A BUG'S LIFE*.) "We applied basic rules of composition—for example, dividing a screen into two thirds in dialogue scenes—to a big-



IRON INNOVATION: Designs for the *Ulysses* (bridge at left; full craft above) show the influence of early industrial America.

ger screen," said Goetz. "We looked at Cinemascope films for research, especially *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, to see what compositions David Lean used. One thing Cinemascope means is that for some viewers, depending on where they sit, the image

looks like a stylized humpback whale," said Goetz, "with a surface articulated with heavy-duty ribs. It's iron-clad, very heavy. The conning tower is moved into the nose to make a big sphere, and that provides an observation window." Goetz admitted the sub would be hydrodynamically impossible. "We went for what would look good on screen. This is a fantasy film, after all."

The interior of the *Ulysses* was designed by Jim Martin. "The most fun I had was doing the concepts for the layout of the submarine hridge. I did a large cut-away of the hridge as a three-level glass hall with generators at the base, a command deck at the center with Rourke's platform overlooking it, and an observation ring at the top. We also had a whole sequence with pontoon cargo boats that launch from the rear of the sub. The challenge was to work out how these pontoons got loaded and launched."

continued on page 54



Character Animation

Artists Cast the War Between Brain and Brawn in Distinctly Visual Terms

Milo is like myself," said John Pomeroy, who was given the responsibility of animating the hero of ATLANTIS. "I felt personal identification with him, more than usual with the characters I've animated. Even though Milo is the result of the collaboration of many people and originated from many sources, it felt like we grew up together for three years."

Pomeroy is an animation veteran whose Disney work stretches back to characters such as WINNIE THE POOH and Tigger, Elliot in PETE'S DRAGON, and Penny, the little girl in THE RESCUERS. More recently, he supervised John Smith, the strapping hero of POCAHONTAS, and the Firebird at the climax of FANTASIA 2000.

The key to Milo, Pomeroy said, is that, "He's led his life in enclosures. All his training has been in laboratories and out of books. He has no worldly experience. Of course, this means he clashes completely with Rourke and the other mercenaries, which is the source of much of the drama and comedy. Initially they treat him as a freak, shun him. The story is how he slowly melts the ice until they're willing to follow him."

Pomeroy joined the ATLANTIS team in 1997. "There was already a year's worth of material at that time, lots of graphics and sketches. I had to synthesize it all through my brain. I also did a minute's worth of experimental animation at the start, deciding what would and wouldn't work. There were about forty 'designs' for me to consider, though these were only sketch-

es, not drawn with attention to moveable design. I whittled the sketches down to four or five, boiling down a basic design concept."

"The challenge was to put flesh on this armature. I had to discover how Milo moved, how he ticked. I needed a character that could move well, be fresh, identifiable, three-dimensional...in short, be acceptable as the person ATLANTIS is about." Pomeroy's designs were vetted by his colleagues. "My Milo had to stand up to the scrutiny of all sorts of people. Luckily, the ATLANTIS team is a great cross-section, acting as a microcosm, reflecting what an average theatre-going audience will think."

Once the design was fixed, Pomeroy continued discussions with his peers. "When a scene was issued, we reviewed story reels, talked about nuances, gestures, and expressions, how the dialogue would be delivered, the continuity in the previous and subsequent scenes."

Pomeroy worked closely with Rourke's animator Mike Surrey, who was responsible for two of Disney's recent animal sidekicks, Timon, the campy meerkat in THE LION KING, and Terk, the tomboy ape in TARZAN. Given that Rourke is (a) human and (b) not exactly inclined toward humor, what were the difficulties in creating him? "When you have a comic

character, you're going to be moving it around eighty percent of the time," said Surrey. "The challenge is simply in the timing. They're there to make audiences laugh, to pay off a joke or add levity to dark moments."

"[Rourke] can't steal scenes early on, because the audience

"Rourke is not normally emotional, but there's a sense [that] Milo pushes his buttons, stretches his patience," Surrey said. "There are subtle ways of showing Rourke doesn't like working with this guy. Expressions of quiet distaste say a lot. For his part, Milo's completely



BODY DRAMA: Disney animators allowed the body english of explorers Milo, Helga, and Rourke to delineate their characters.

is supposed to be focusing on other characters. The animation has to be subtle. For much of the film, Rourke's often in scenes because the plot requires that he's there. It's important for him to show his presence quietly. He can't move more than he should, and distract from more important characters."

How would Surrey describe Rourke? "When you meet him, your impression is a man of business, a man with the attitude that there's a job to do, so let's do it. His voice is warm, reassuring. He's respected by the other characters who see him as a straightforward, by-the-book guy. The fun thing to do is play Rourke off Milo, who's awkward, fumbling and anything but 'by-the-book.'"

intimidated by this commanding stranger."

Quite the opposite relationship exists between Rourke and Helga Sinclair, his lady lieutenant. "We played around with ideas of what their relation might be," said Surrey. "Was it more than a working partnership? He's not so military with Helga, except when other mercenaries are present. There's a scene when Milo is in a truck with Rourke and Helga, and Rourke seems visibly relaxed."

"You can't have him performing through full-body movement. It has to be through eye-glances and head-tilts, that sort of thing." Surrey admitted it was restricting at times. "It's a lot of work, for not much payback in audience reaction!"

—Andrew Osmond

Mike Mignola

Hellboy Master Discovers His Influence Extends Far Beyond the Printed Page

By Andrew Osmond

When Mike Mignola came to Disney, some of the first things he saw were several of his past comic-books being consulted by artists. "As well as HELLBOY, they were using titles like FAFHRD and THE GREY MOUSER (Mignola's take on Fritz Leiber's famed fantasy heroes) and my version of BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA. They included some of my favorite past work, though I think my style is more refined now. It was odd to see Disney using comics like FAFHRD, which hadn't sold very well and were long out of print!"

These days, being out of print is not a worry for Mignola. His profile in the comic world is sky-high, thanks to a certain big, red superhero who doesn't need a costume to be recognized. Before HELLBOY, Mignola had worked on a wide range of titles,

including the swashbuckler IRONWOLF and GOTHAM BY GASLIGHT, an acclaimed Gothic reworking of the BATMAN legend. "I'd heard rumblings I was popular with animators," said Mignola; "that animators were copying bits of my style for this or that project. However, the first people who bothered to call me and ask for input were Disney. It was kinda nice!"

How aware was Mignola of Disney? "I had seen Disney films as a kid, of course. Curiously enough, shortly before I got the call from Don Hahn, my three-year-old daughter had been going through a phase of watching Disney videos, sometimes five times a day! I was watching them with her, rediscovering them from my own childhood. When Don called, it was startling, a strange coincidence."

When Mignola first visited Disney, the

ATLANTIS designs he'd inspired were already at advanced stages. "They had taken pages from my comic books and someone had covered them with notes, analyzing my style. It was basically a guide to how to draw like me. I didn't know I had a style to imitate, but someone had worked it out! It was a bizarre experience, but very flattering. I'd always assumed Disney was a whole parallel world, completely unaware of me. As I understand, it was the directors who knew my work. It was a nice feeling to have guys on that

late to screen. Even I wasn't sure it would work! But I felt Disney had done something similar before. I'm thinking of SLEEPING BEAUTY, which again is different from the conventional Disney look, with a dramatic design style."

Mignola remembers things were very flexible in pre-production. "I was just throwing out ideas for the film. I would off-handedly suggest, 'What about this?' or 'How about that?' For example, the basic idea of Atlantis was of a civilization in ruins, full of broken

SETTING THE STANDARD: Mike Mignola arrived at the Disney Studios to discover the artists conspicuously analyzing his unique style. **RIGHT:** Model sheet of Mlo.



level who knew what I was doing."

Mignola describes his art style as involving a simplified color palette; objects and characters with simple shapes and big masses; and dramatic contrasts of light and dark. "Initially, some Disney people thought the look wouldn't trans-

buildings and statues. I casually suggested some of the lumps of rock that looked as if they had fallen off buildings were actually machines and could fly. It was an innocent comment. Then I came back and saw they'd used the idea! I talk a lot, but don't expect people to listen and I certainly don't expect them to put my comments in a Disney film!"



Mignola plays down his personal involvement in the film. "In my first year on ATLANTIS—the year I was most involved—I went down to Disney about half-a-dozen times and never stayed for more than three days. An enormous amount of the film came from Disney studying my comic-book work. I didn't do much drawing myself, compared to the acres of pictures around me."

"Most of the character designs had already been done along the principles taken from my work. I didn't have much to add. Again, the animators seemed to have a lot of the technical elements nailed down. There were so many expert artists working on elements like the trucks and the submarine. I focused on the city and how the people would live in it. I always preferred the fantastical things."

Mignola confirmed Dave Goetz's account of how Atlantis was conceived (see main text). "We decided Atlantis and its people would not resemble any particular race or culture. I remember we looked particularly at Polynesian culture, and lots of photos of Indian temples, but we made it more fantastical. We took bits and pieces from all sorts of places, using real cultures to give Atlantis authenticity and detail, but mixed them up in new ways."

Disney's Atlantis is haunted in more ways than one. The general populace lives at the edges of the city, while the palace is at the center of the ghost town, with its own "phantom" (Leonard Nimoy's king) within. "One question we wrestled with was where do the Atlanteans live? We thought perhaps only the king lived in the old buildings, while the other Atlanteans moved down to the edges of the island and set up a new community."

"One idea was that they lived in Polynesian-style stilt huts," Mignola said. "But that proved too familiar, too South Seas. So I suggested the idea of them living in hollowed-out plants, gourds. These would have a Japanese lantern shape

and be big enough to house a family. The gourds are still alive, still connected to their parent tree. The idea is that the Atlanteans have abandoned their stone structures and moved to something much more organic."

The gourd was another spur-of-the-moment idea. "It was a case of me saying 'What about this?' then leaving, coming back months later and going, 'Oh! You used that!' In the event, it was an idea that only figures briefly in the film. We had lots of ideas for scenes which had to be abbreviated, otherwise it would have been a four-hour movie! The beauty of a comic book is that I can be slow and linger on an image, but that's not possible in a film."

chock-full of death-traps, monsters, guns... Some of this got weeded out, but a lot of the dark is still there."

How much does Mignola think animation can learn from comics, and vice versa? "There can certainly be cross-overs. The obvious example is Japan, where Japanese animation is derived from comics. I think



THE THICK BLACK LINE: ATLANTIS' bold, angular style finds its roots in such Mignola works as *Hellboy* (above). **LEFT:** An idle comment from Mignola led to the creation of the film's stone fish finale.

ATLANTIS with about two-thirds finished animation. "My involvement tapered off once the film moved into production; I went onto other projects. I forgot it for a while. Now seeing the film almost finished, and the commercials on TV, its importance is starting to hit: 'Wow! This is a big thing!' Coming back to the film now, I can see none of my visits were wasted. My style translated better than I could have imagined."

Would he do it again? Here, Mignola gave away some unexpected news. While the producer and directors were politely evasive about the prospect of returning to ATLANTIS, Mignola confirms he's involved in a TV series based on the film. "I believe it's been green-lighted. As I understand, the series fills in the gap between the movie and an upcoming straight-to-video sequel. I'm working as creature designer, making the 'monsters of the week.' In fact, I've just finished my first creature and after this [interview] I'll start work on my second!"

However, Mignola did mourn the loss of the original prologue, in which Vikings encounter the Leviathan. "I was blown away by the Viking sequence," said Mignola. "It was very dark, genuinely scary, very un-Disney. The scene was dropped in favor of another where we see Atlantis in its ancient glory. I understand why Disney made the change, but I think something was lost. The new prologue gives away a lot about Atlantis at the very beginning. The original opening would have blown you away, only for the later revelations to have blown you away again!"

Mignola's work often features grotesque elements and black humor. Was he tempted to influence ATLANTIS in that way? Mignola laughed. "I knew who I was working for! It was always Disney's show. I didn't say, 'Oh, let's decapitate some more characters!' That said, the film is dark a lot of the time. In the original conception, it was

ATLANTIS is a very good example of cross-pollination." And how would he compare working in both industries? "The great thing about comics is that I can do it all on my own. But it was a wonderful experience being part of a collaborative team, sitting in a room with so many talented people, all of whom draw like nobody's business!"

Mignola had nothing but praise for the Disney studio. "It was an amazing experience, walking through the halls in the Disney building, seeing every inch of wall-space covered in incredible pictures. Many people think these films are done by machines now, but there's so much great, plain old-fashioned artwork being drawn there. I saw a lot of pre-production art for TARZAN and it was some of the best drawing I'd ever seen. I was just saying, 'Wow! I'm not in that league...' I was really fortunate to be there."

At the time of the interview, Mignola had seen a version of

However, the story changed and the unloading was handled differently."

The combination of Matt Codd's and Jim Martin's *Ulysses* designs is praised by their colleague, Ricardo Delgado. The three production designers previously worked on a range of live-action blockbusters in costumes, creature effects and set design. "Matt's exterior designs are bold and decisive," Delgado said. "Jim lives for the details and figuring everything out to the nth degree, and the sub reflects those distinct sensibilities. They worked, worried, squabbled and finally finished a great submarine. I've been friends with both of them since the beginning of my career, and it was great to share this experience."

Delgado, however, remembered one incident that seemed near-disastrous at the time. "There was a model of the sub being built for the animators and executives. The model wasn't ready, despite many assurances that it would be. At one point or another, all three of us were running around the hallways at Disney Feature Animation trying to hide it from Don Hahn, who I thought was going to fire us for sure! We're used to live-action producers who would have chewed us up and spit us out for not having it finished on time. But Don was great about it. He could see we were working our tails off to give them something that had never been before."

In general, Martin said, "I loved my design for the explorers' technology on two

work from World War I designs to get the rickety feel of early planes. I also tried to keep them looking skeletal: You can see in to the engines; there are no frills involved. Kirk and Gary wanted them to look as if you could assemble them under the carib. The same applied to the zeppelin: It was kept to a framework with engines and ropes."

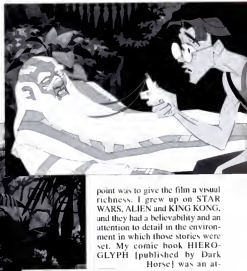
"If I remember correctly, the directors explained all these great inventions were prototypes of Whitmore Industries. Whitmore is this tycoon who owns automobile companies, airplane companies, shipyards, etc. As part of this idea, the fuel truck we designed had a Whitmore oil logo on the side. The glider was the 'Whitmore Wasp' or the 'Whitmore Wing.' I think we ended up doing a wasp logo on the side of the glider launchers. When I did the working drawings of the submarine for Matt Codd, we did them as if they were old sepia blueprints from the period, with the Whitmore industries logo."

How did production design on *ATLANTIS* compare to a live-action film? "It didn't seem that different," said Martin. "You have a list of things and places that need conceptualizing, and you begin roughing out your ideas. There was a feeling of col-

drawings. And of course, the artifacts don't have to be built—it just depends on what looks and moves best. The problem of building is not a constraint as it is in live-action."

Ricardo Delgado added, "I think *ATLANTIS* represented an interesting problem: taking the American animated feature and making an epic adventure film out of it. Many anime films are adventures. Hayao Miyazaki's being prime examples, but the U.S. animated features have traditionally been musical-oriented. The one Disney film that was often compared to what we were doing was the live-action *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA*. From my standpoint, this was a great opportunity to make an adventure film in an animated setting, with the well-rounded characters Disney is known for."

Delgado continued, "The thing I thought was most important from a design stand-



ANCIENT MYSTERIES: Princess Kida (in left) and her lether (above) are proprietors of a secret that could change the course of twentieth century technology. No, they didn't invent the Clapper.

principles, guided by Dave Goetz and the directors. The first was to keep things simple. The explorers would only bring the essentials, so things wouldn't be fancy. Engines and frameworks might be exposed to save the weight that plating or decoration would add. My second principle was to try my best to make things look like they could work. I approached the designs by trying to think them through rationally, and use common sense."

As well as the submarine, these principles also applied to the airplanes and zeppelin at the film's climax. "Dave had me

laboration and a free flow of ideas. As we entered actual production, the directors narrowed the ideas and the design began to take shape."

Matt Codd saw the benefits on animation's side. "There's very little time in live-action, compared to animation. The maximum for live-action is about six months, then it's on to the next job. For *ATLANTIS*, the period was at least twice as long. In live-action, everything moves at a hundred-mile-an-hour pace. Here, the length of development meant you could do hundreds of

point was to give the film a visual richness. I grew up on *STAR WARS*, *ALIEN* and *KING KONG*, and they had a believability and an attention to detail in the environment in which those stories were set. My comic book *HIEROGLYPH* [published by Dark Horse] was an attempt to create an environment no one had seen before and set a good story in it. *ATLANTIS* has the same kind of attention to detail."

The special effects supervisor for *ATLANTIS* was Marlon West, who had to handle assorted explosions, volcanoes, tidal waves, and aerial dogfights. The latter take place in the great subterranean cavern between the mechs' motorized hang-gliders and Atlantean stone fish. And what, pray, are stone fish? "They're fanciful flying machines, powered by crystals," explained West. "They're supposedly made of

stone—basically flying statues. The whole fish looks like a sculpture. Originally, the plan was that the fish would have no moving parts at all, but of course it looked stiff. So we went back and changed things to make the fins move. It looks like the fins are used for balance and propulsion. The stone fish are nippy in a dogfight, and hover and scoot around. Not that we gave much



BLESSING AND CURSE: *Atlantis* drew society in ruins (above) showed the Disney artists to make a point about the dangers of relying too heavily on technology, but they also come up with some dramatic settings (top).

the dust thrown by the trucks, the silt cloud when the Ulysses touches down underwater, and the sparks thrown by the mercs' vehicles and digger drill. The explosion of the Ulysses was also hand-drawn.

In total, West estimated, about three-quarters of the effects were traditionally animated. Their presence, often in largely computer-animated

ings—very simple, bold silhouettes—have to be digitally manipulated, to get more information out of them. The digital people bring out multiple color values in interiors so that, for example, a flame has a 'hot core.' The artwork is manipulated to get these different values. But the shapes are still big, bold and flashy. Digital elements were rendered flatter, without typical rounded shading; a much more high-contrast look."

An example of this digital manipulation can be seen in the film's climax, with the lava explosions. In contrast with the lava in *ALADDIN*, where the main body was digital, here it was drawn traditionally. "But we used digital manipulation to introduce values in these big broad planes of color, to generate variety. Like fire and other effects, the lava was designed to fit into the comic-book look: stylized, bold and crisp."

Kiran Joshi served as digital production department head. "About 550 shots in *ATLANTIS* had digital elements," he said. "That's just over a quarter of the film, which represents a new level for Disney. The digital team was very small—about twenty-six people in total, and not all of those were working through the whole project. But they achieved a tremendous

thought to how they worked!"

"Some of the effects were based on film of old World War vehicles," West said. "Some we just made up, and some involved taking an everyday experience—for example, a drill-bit getting stuck—and multiplying it a hundredfold. Very often, all we did is exaggerate what one sees in real-life." West emphasized the team did not go for anthropomorphism, or use devices like squash 'n' stretch. "The animation of the vehicles is matter-of-fact. It's not like the train in *DUMBO* or the taxi in *ROGER RABBIT*."

While the Ulysses sub is cumbersome and slow ("It just has to look good," said West), the mini-subs used by the mercs in battle were more interesting to animate. "They're very fast and unrealistic, especially for 1914! We looked at footage of World War I fighter-planes, the open-cockpit variety. At times, there are fifteen or twenty mini-subs on screen. We enjoyed the freedom in deciding how they'd behave, and how they'd move most excitingly for the audience. It's only because they trail bubbles everywhere that you're reminded they're subs."

Indeed, West revealed there was a deliberate policy not to put a lot of "atmosphere" in the undersea environment. "It's not like the underwater sequence in *PINOCCHIO*. There are no ripple-glass effects. Our undersea is dark, blue, but not murky. Even this deep, it looks very crisp. What atmosphere there is provided by the blue lighting, the background shipwrecks, and the bubbles left by the sub." Other hand-drawn elements provided by the effects department include

scenes, helped integrate digital and hand-drawn elements. The challenge of combining CG and hand-drawn animation is one Disney has faced repeatedly over recent years, from the Big Ben showdown in *GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE* through to the tree-surfing in *TARZAN*. In *ATLANTIS*, the way to tackle

"We draw on the traditions of Marvel, Josh Kirby, and Mike Mignola: Bold, punchy, exciting."

- Special Effects Supervisor Marlon West

the challenge was largely determined by the comic-book style.

"The film draws especially on the traditions of Marvel and Josh Kirby, as well as Mignola," said West. "We're talking bold, punchy, exciting designs. The digital elements were worked out hand-in-hand with the scene-planning and color-management departments. The priority was to get sufficient color variation, enough of a range of values, while staying true to the comic-book look. After all, the color can't be quite as flat as a comic-book, because the screen is so big."

West continued, "In most animated films, we would put a lot of detail into the hand-drawings themselves. Here the draw-

amount for a small staff."

An important precedent was set by having digital artists involved from the early stages of the film. According to Joshi, "One of our team, Matt Suzuki, did the initial designs for the seven explorer vehicles [not counting the Ulysses and smaller subs]. These were filtered through the Mignola style by Dave Goetz's department, but Suzuki went on to build the vehicles in the computer and worked on animating them. The fact that an artist could work across these departments, from visual development through to 3-D design, made digital a more integrated part of the film. It meant the digital department could help define the overall look, rather than just handling one

creature or sequence."

Joshi continued, "ATLANTIS uses digital animation in all areas, not a single aspect like the Hydra in *HERCULES* or the trees in *TARZAN*. It was relevant to the characters, the machines and the environment. We dealt with anything that was tedious and

attack and see other strange creatures. Ricardo Delgado remembers, "There was a Mignola sketch of a lava whale, and it was literally just that: an obdian whale shape with lava pouring out of its cracks and holes. It was cool! The directors loved it, but weren't sure how it would fit the story. I don't remember how I ended up

believe it can sell itself. The thrill-ride movie has a great history, both at this studio and others, through Disney films like *IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS* to more recent films like *RAIDERS* and *STAR-GATE*. But the films that we remember aren't just full of fights and explosions, they have great stories and compelling, powerful characters like Captain Nemo. I think, we have that grasp of characters and story."

Hahn stressed the film is meant to appeal to Disney's loyal family audience. "But maybe ATLANTIS will allow us to expand our audiences in some ways, to date-night couples and people in their early twenties. The film is stylish, it has a 'thrill factor.'" Hahn pointed to recent trends in fantasy films: "The lines between live-action and an-



costly to do hand-drawn."

At least half a dozen scenes made use of the Deep Canvas technology introduced in *TARZAN*, which effectively let artists paint directly on 3-D backgrounds. "The system is still being expanded and evolved, and new applications found," said Joshi. (*TREASURE PLANET*, an upcoming Disney animated SF adventure, will employ an even wider range of virtual sets.) "Deep Canvas was easier in ATLANTIS than in *TARZAN* because the scenery was rigid, not organic and moving like *TARZAN*'s leaves and branches. We found it a great timesaver."

Like any film, ATLANTIS changed over the course of its development. "All movies go through mutation, and there were many things added or taken out, though the through-line never really changed," said Trousdale. The most important change involved the Leviathan, which would have originally appeared earlier in the film. "We did a whole alternate prologue, involving Vikings in the North Atlantic trying to find Atlantis with the Shepherd's Journal. Unfortunately for them, they're attacked by the Leviathan and meet a grisly fate!" Mike Mignola describes the scene as "very dark, genuinely scary and very undisney."

Trousdale explained the Viking scene had been fully animated, involving months of hack/breaking R&D work. "But it was an important learning process. It developed the look of the film, the style of the special effects, and of course the Leviathan itself. It can be seen either as an expensive mistake or a great practice ground!" The sequence is likely to turn up as a DVD extra, as well as being used in a tie-in PC game.

Also dropped was a sequence as the travelers move through dry caves after the Leviathan

doing another version, but I didn't want to simply redraw Mike's idea. So my version

SPIRITUAL TECH: CGI helped render a force shield that's part bitmap, part geodesic dome (right). ABOVE: Princess Kida in the midst of forces that meld the past glories and future hope of a submerged kingdom.



was more of a six-legged Eryops, which is a prehis-

toric reptile or amphibian. It looked like an obese frog with a salamander tail... Oh, and it was seven hundred feet long.

"I drew these things lying round a lava mud bog, complete with infants and juveniles. I put some Mignola-like architecture at the other end of the cave so the expedition could pass through. Two other artists, John Sanford and Todd Kurasawa, did a storyboard where the crew mistook the animals' blowholes for Jaquazzi's and put their feet in to relax! It was great, but it got cut in favor of another sequence."

In recent years, there have been a number of "dramatic" animated adventure films, many of which failed to click at the box office. After such commercial disappointments as Warner's *IRON GIANT*, why is Disney venturing into such risky territory?

"We wanted to make a great action-adventure film, in the tradition of 20,000 LEAGUES or RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK," explained Don Hahn. "If the movie is good, if it moves you emotionally and viscerally, if it satisfies you as you're sitting in the dark eating your popcorn... then we

have become a lot more blurred over recent years. There's THE PHANTOM MENACE, MEN IN BLACK... There's been a tremendous resurgence of animation into live-action. Today's audiences are very visually literate.

meaning when they see a film like THE MATRIX or THE CELL, they know they're looking at animation. There's a huge appetite for such films."

What of the criticism that ATLANTIS misses the point of animation? Hahn agreed that. "In one sense, a lot of ATLANTIS could have been done in live-action. By choosing animation, we transport the audience to a place more fully rooted in fantasy, a dreamscape. An animated film can 'turn on a dime' in terms of plot and emotion. It can develop and twist much faster, in the way LION KING moves from the tragedy of Mufasa's death in one scene to a flatulent warthog in the next. In live-action, these transitions feel melodramatic. In animation, the audience accepts them, allowing us to move from horror to comedy in seconds."

Hahn concluded, "In an animated adventure, the characters don't need to be all Hollywood heroes in sweaty shirts! We have an ensemble of characters ranging from comedic to sinister, which we can use in a huge number of different ways in animation. We can put them hundreds of fathoms underwater in a submarine; we can attack them with a giant sea-beast; we can take them to Atlantis."

Marc Okrand

The Man Who Put Words In Worf's Mouth Develops the Mother of All Earthly Languages

Many of the ATLANTIS audience will recognize two cast names from the realm of filmed SF. Leonard Nimoy and Claudia Christian both have legions of fans, thanks to their respective performances as key characters in the STAR TREK and BABYLON 5 universes. However, dedicated aficionados may spot in the credits a third participant who had a profound impact on the genre: Marc Okrand. The creator of the Klingon and Vulcan languages as we know them, Okrand devised a fictitious tongue for the Atlanteans.

Okrand was quick to make clear he was not involved with designing the ornate Atlantean alphabet. (Veteran Disney designer John Emerson helped with the letters.) Okrand's concern was purely with the language. "I approached Atlantean as a linguistic anthropologist," he explained, "who goes to live with a language group. There are basic questions I would ask the group—ask myself, in this case! I would glean details, like: Do their nouns have plurals? Does their language have gender? Does it have cases? I write down the answers, getting a clearer picture as I go."

A similar process of inquiry takes place in the film story. "The whole way the characters get to Atlantis is bound up with language," Okrand said. "The characters have to begin somewhere, of course—a starting point which provides clues. Milo starts with the *Shepherd's Journal*, a book written in Atlantean. How can he work out what it said? There's no Rosetta Stone in this case. The book includes written labels beside pictures,

but that's not enough in itself."

The breakthrough comes when Milo realizes certain symbols operate on many other different symbols. "This suggests the first type are suffixes, and Atlantean is an 'inflecting' language, like French or Spanish. That means Milo can distinguish grammar from the rest of the writing, and then the labels help him decipher the language." Okrand had input into the early development of the story, going back four years. "I met the producer and directors and we discussed spoken language, written language, all the different systems of writing."

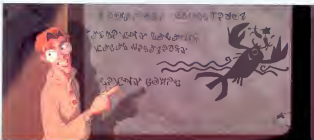
"Very early in the film," Okrand continued, "it's established the Atlanteans can speak English." (Some of their Atlantean-language dialogue is subtitled, some left for budding linguists.) "My starting-point was the idea of Atlantean as a root-language, the ancestor of English and many other modern languages. It may be unhistorical, but it was dramatically convenient! I started looking for sounds, grammar, and structure that were common in languages round the world; for example, the 'b' sound in 'boy' and the 'p' in 'Peter.'"

Atlantean has 29 letters, including individual letters for "sh," "ch," and "th." It reads in zig-zag fashion - left to right, right to left, left to right and so

on. More fundamentally, Okrand explained, "The structure of Atlantean grammar is not English. As I developed the language, I leaned toward Proto Indo-European (also known as PIE), the hypothetical source of Latin and Romance languages as well as Celtic, Germanic, and

the voice-actors, who also had a dialogue coach to help them." As well as dialogue, Atlantean is used for the background chanting in the city's crystal chamber.

According to Okrand, there's little connection between Atlantean and Vulcan. "Vulcan



SEEN AND HEARD: While the development of the 29-character Atlantean alphabet fell to other hands, Okrand had to create a language that could have lived before civilization itself.

Baltic tongue, I kept this idea in mind, as well as using Chinese and a lot of Hebrew. I stayed away from words that sounded too much like English. Where necessary, I could make words 'unfamiliar,' for example by adding syllables."

Okrand had the dialogue that needed to be translated for the film, albeit subject to script revisions. Of course, the fact that Atlantean was imaginary had advantages. "The great thing about a made-up language, of course, is that if a line of dialogue doesn't sound good to the ear, you adjust it!" After creating the Atlantean equivalents for the lines, Okrand wrote them phonetically for the actors. "I also recorded myself speaking the lines," said Okrand. "The tape was given to

was very limited compared with Atlantean." He explained that Klingon is a better comparison, with its more sophisticated structure. "But in a way, my approach in Klingon was the reverse," said Okrand, "because I deliberately aimed for uncommon structures. Atlantean is different, because it's the source of human languages."

Does he expect history to repeat itself, with people learning Atlantean as they did Klingon? "I suspect many people in the audience will be very interested in Atlantean," admitted Okrand, "especially given its importance to the story." So might we see more of the language, in a book or an ATLANTIS sequel? "I don't know yet. I'll have to wait and see!"

- Andrew Osmond

ILM EFFECTS FOR THE MUMMY RETURNS

Pygmy Mummies and Anubis Warriors Kept the Industrial Light & Magic Artists Busy

By Chuck Wagner

The story of *THE MUMMY RETURNS* picks up ten years after the end of the previous film. The characters played by Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz are now married and have a young son. The son stumbles upon an ancient scorpion talisman and the game is on: Imhotep and his ancient beloved are back, as is their apparent rival, the Scorpion King. The fate of the earth hangs in the balance as a three-way struggle unfolds.

Weaving all these elements together is John Berton, the visual effects supervisor for *MUMMY*'s effects house, Industrial Light & Magic. "The amount of work that we do here at ILM has increased vastly over the last ten years," Berton said. "We went from a big show being something like 50 shots, like *TERMINATOR 2* ten years ago, to today, [with] a show like *THE MUMMY RETURNS*—with 450 shots or whatever the shot count is now. I don't know if anybody knows that number right at the moment...about 400. That's considered a lar-

gish show. But compared to *STAR WARS: EPISODE I* with 2000 shots? We're putting through a tremendous amount of work."

Of course, Imhotep, the returning star of the original film, benefited from new effects in the area of more close-ups and skin work. "We couldn't call it *THE MUMMY RETURNS* if he didn't return," chuckled art director Alex Laurant. But those who assumed that *THE MUMMY RETURNS* would just wheel out the Mummy, go through some motions, and then bring in *The Rock* as the Scorpion King to further the franchise were wrong. *THE MUMMY RETURNS* features a host of new creations sprung from the

fied familiar characters from *THE MUMMY*, and created new creatures based on new motifs.

"What we're asked to do in the beginning," said Laurant, "is to help visualize and crystallize all the ideas that are in the script—perhaps minimally described in the script. This serves to get the director creatively excited, and to clarify what he or she wants to put in the movie. It also gets the studio excited about what they're investing in. Sometimes when we get to drawing and brainstorming on paper and with sculpture, it can also have a reverse impact on the story."

"As the film gets green-lit and advances, we contribute more and more precise levels of artwork that help guide the construction of the crea-

ting in many more, the film had to deliver not only what audiences loved about the first movie, but it had to deliver more. So the director has upped the ante—raised the bar—in both quality and quantity as to what kind of visual effects this picture was going to need. He came to us with a very long list of very ambitious ideas and said, "make these things real.""

There are three new main characters in *THE MUMMY RETURNS*: Anubis warriors—8' tall, dog-headed semi-humanoids that decay with time; pygmy mummies—little mummies with a big, nasty streak (think Zuni fetish from the "Prey" segment of *TRILOGY OF TERROR*—or perhaps, an anti-Ewok); and the Scorpion King.

IT'S CURSED TO BE THE KING: With a smile, computer artist, wrestling star the Rock (right) unleashed his own brand of Hell, and Imhotep walks again (below), in *THE MUMMY RETURNS*.

mind of Stephen Sommers, and given life by the effects people of ILM. In *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, ILM modi-



tures, mostly in the computer, but also in physical manifestations.

"To bring back the audience that flocked to see the first one, and to

"The Anubis warriors were one of the things that was mentioned very vaguely in the script," Laurant explained. "We got to have a very free hand in developing what this dog-headed warrior was. It's one of the few creatures in the



film that has any minimal basis in authentic, ancient Egyptian mythology. We started with a number—three to six or more—of different artists brainstorming on paper. We have a loose umbrella group within the art department called the Creature/Character Development Group.

"The director wanted the Anubis warriors to be fearsome. There were to be thousands of these things. We were going to see them both in vast hordes, as well as up close and personal in your-face battle scenes. They had to be very sinister and of course not like anything we've seen ever before in any other movie."

One artist, Carlos Fuentes, had one piece of color artwork that best inspired the director. "That artist nailed it," Laurant said. "My job then was to take this artist's vision and make it anatomically feasible. I worked with the Animation Supervisor, Daniel Jeannette, to develop another series of drawings where we made decisions about the musculature. We tried to develop the details in as many views as possible to provide the sculptors—both in clay and digital—all the information that they'd need to build the correct models."

A maquette of an Anubis warrior, built by Richard Miller in the model shop under Laurant's guidance (he also oversaw the digital coloring of the digitized model), was the master product in going from 2D to 3D. "The maquette is the working bible for the CG modelers, and it's the final entity that the director buys off on," Laurant said. "The different Anubis warriors displayed different versions of costuming and weaponry and also different degrees of mummification, rot and erosion."

Perhaps the most impressive shots in the film are those of hordes of undead Anubis warriors sweeping over the land and clashing with an army of horsemen. "Those shots involve replication of photography," Berton explained. "We

DOGGED ATTACK. One of the film's major setpieces, the battle with the Anubis Warriors, required torturous location shoots, live-action stunt people, and CG animation.

had 200 horsemen, and we actually had our guys go out there and measure the desert into squares. We had little tiny cones out there that the horsemen were directed into. They would stand in a box, and we'd roll film, and then they would move off. Then we'd take them into the next square, stop them, roll film, and they'd take off again. We shot something like 55–60 elements of those 200 horsemen out in the desert in the course of an entire day. We just kept shooting until the dust storms came in and blew us off the mountain, which happened almost every day! Our compositors took those and put them all in there."

The human army then clashed with the army of Anubis warriors. "Half the shot is completely synthetic [the Anubis warriors]," Berton said, "and the other half of the shot is completely photographic [the horsemen]. We've got these digital characters running across the desert in the opposite direction, clashing and running into the horsemen on horseback, and fighting with them. But the horsemen on horseback didn't have anybody to fight with. What we did is we had guys out there in blue suits with nine-foot poles sticking off the tops of their heads, who were replicating the Anubis warriors. They charged into this mass of horsemen, and the horsemen reined back their horses and started slashing at these poles with their swords, and they hit them, which gives them the correct action."

"Then our digital paint artists went in and painstakingly painted out the blue guys,

and then we replaced them with Anubis warriors that were match-animated to run in there and deflect the blows of the horsemen. So you have this huge shot with 30,000 people charging on horseback on the one side and 30,000 Anubis warriors—all synthetic—charging in from the other side and fighting hand-to-hand with these live-action figures. It's an astonishing shot."

Then came the pygmy mummies. "The director called them pygmy mummies," Laurant explained. "Spider monkey-like, but fierce like a piranha, was the description the director gave. Very vicious. They're seen in this jungle oasis, where they travel in packs."

The Anubis warriors are fully digital, but the pygmy mummies started out as physical—and inanimate—models. "There were a couple of scenes," Laurant continued, "where the pygmies are needed before they come to life. They're corpse-like things hanging inanimately from trees, or buried in tree roots, or tree roots have grown around them."

But the most jarring new character is the Scorpion King, who starts out as a humanoid, played by WWF star The Rock, but is later reborn as a true, full-CGI monster: scorpion body, eight legs, three tails, two pairs of arms and pincers, partial human torso and head of The Rock. This may very well represent the first rendering of a CG human face—where the face is that of a recognized performer—in film: a potentially groundbreaking achievement.

"Dozens of drawings were made by different artists to try

and arrive at what this guy was going to look like," Laurant said. "He had to not only be fearsome, but he had to be a big payoff at the climax of the movie."

"So for Industrial Light & Magic to digitally create a convincing head and upper torso of a human character that the audience has already seen in the movie and that, in fact a huge number of wrestling fans in the United States are going to be familiar with from other media, was a real challenge. We had to make it look like that person, and that was really a big challenge—pushing the proverbial envelope. The final manifestation of the Scorpion King is completely digital."

Attention to detail is what sells each shot, according to John Berton. So many people in work on portions of shots. That's why Berton likes to have "group dailies," where everyone can come together to see the ongoing result, make critiques, and understand their role as it applies to the entire film. "It's all about making the movie look good," Berton said. "It's not about making any given shot look good."

How many people at ILM are working on the film? "All of them!" Berton chuckled. "It's probably somewhere around a hundred. That's what it takes to do a show of this magnitude. That number changes daily, which is why no one knows!"

Berton is clear that ILM's policy is to pre-plan shots, shoot them, then add the effects as needed. "Planning makes the work back here focus on making the shot look great, instead of having to make it work," he said.



A Little Byte of Soul

By Dennis Kleinman

I hope I'm not the only person alive whose favorite part of going to the movies is watching the trailers. As an extremely restless viewer, I find these super-condensed jolts of movie-essence have the same advantages as a greatest hits CD—all the explosions and bus crashes without all that boring plot and character stuff.

I'm only partially kidding.

Trailers also provide a quick overview of what the latest trends in Hollywood are, and demonstrate how they are playing on Main Street, USA. Judging from recent trailers, the big trend out of Hollywood is movies that prominently feature digital animation. And from the buzz these trailers generate, Main Street is eating it up. Classic, flat animation, such as the kind featured in Disney's summer offering, *ATLANTIS*, looks surprisingly...uh...flat by comparison, and draws hardly a murmur, let alone a buzz.

While digital animation's been around for a while, Summer 2001 seems to be the turning point, the moment when it moves from a supporting character in movies like *TITANIC* or an eye-popping curiosity like the *TOY STORY* movies, to being Hollywood's bread-and-butter (popcorn-and-butter?), movie-making medium.

Two of these digital marvels, *THE MUMMY RETURNS* and *SHREK*, have already grossed almost half a billion dollars between them. While my enthusiasm for both movies is far from unqualified, the sense of having witnessed the beginnings of a brave new era in film history is undeniable. I've seen the future, and it is composed of pixels.

Technically, *THE MUMMY RETURNS* is an astonishing piece of filmmaking. I've never seen computer-based animation integrated so believably with live-action. Animated creatures and live-action humans fight each other, scowl at each other, even (ugh) kiss each other so seamlessly that no suspension of disbelief is necessary. Dammit, this stuff looks real!

Adding to the fun is the fact that there are so many of these creatures scurrying, clawing and slithering their way through the course of the picture. Every ten minutes, a new ghastly, rigorously conceived and executed wonder appears out of nowhere to vex our heroes. In *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, we enter a world inhabited equally by humans and monsters, a world I've dreamed about since I was in second grade. No wonder kids—and former kids, like me—are lining up to see this movie again and again.

The bad news is, the humans in the movie are nowhere near as rigorously conceived, and it is the writers who should be executed. The leads are second go-rounds from the first *MUMMY* movie,

which were in turn derived unashamedly from the heroic-yet-human *INDIANA JONES* model, which in turn were derived unashamedly from action serials of the thirties and forties. Like a clone derived from a clone derived from a clone, the human characters in *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, played by Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz, don't have any character DNA left. They are as flat and stiff as drawings on a pyramid wall, mouthing platitudes and quips so contrived and unrevealing that they may as well be written in hieroglyphs.

The obvious irony is that while the human characters are flat, the animated beasts are fully three-dimensional, bursting with desire, passion, and tragic flaws. The more I thought about this obsessive concentration on the movie's fantasy creatures at the expense of its human ones, the more I realized that the reigning god of this movie wasn't Anubis, or Ruh, or even the Mighty Spielberg. Friends, let us all bow down to the true god of *THE MUMMY RETURNS*: Ray Harryhausen. More specifically, the Ray Harryhausen who created the Sinbad movies: *7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1958); *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1974); and *SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER* (1977).

Like *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, the Sinbad flicks always involved a voyage to an exotic land to rescue someone, usually a princess, from some evil vizier. (In *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, it is the son of the hero couple, well-

played by Freddie Boath, and there actually is an evil vizier-type, played by Alan Armstrong). Also at stake is the throne of a kingdom (In *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, the kingdom is "the world," and the contenders are the Mummy, played with magnificent malevolence by Arnold Vosloo, and the Scorpion King, played with rugged rockiness by The Rock. Most tellingly, the climax of *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, as in all the Sinbad movies, takes place in a dark, primordial cavern where the hero must defeat a gigantic creature-from-hell—in this case a half-man, half-scorpion—in order to save the day, the kingdom, his loved one, and so on.

Of course, no one went to see the Sinbad movies for the story. No one cared much about Sinbad the titular sailor either, especially the filmmakers. (How else do you explain the casting of Patrick Wayne as the lead in *GOLDEN VOYAGE*?) We went to see these movies for one reason only: because Ray Harryhausen was an absolute genius at dredging up monsters from the id and delivering them to your local movie screen in all their nightmarish glory. Now *that's* entertainment!

The makers of *THE MUMMY RETURNS* have pulled off a sim-

The Mummy Returns

Universal, 2001. Starring Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, Arnold Vosloo, Patricia Velázquez, Freddie Boath. Written and Directed by Stephen Sommers. Produced by Neal H. Moritz. Executive Producer: Bob Ducsay. Costume Designer: John Bloomfield. Special Makeup Effects Artist: Nick Dudman. PG-13. \$4.9



lar trick. If that's not a good enough reason to see a movie five or six times, I don't know what is.

Bringing fantasy elements into a real-world environment was the challenge the makers **THE MUMMY RETURNS** set before themselves. The opposite and no less daunting challenge faced by the creators of **SHREK** was to take real-world elements (animals, humans, snort) and integrate them believably into a fantasy environment.

As in **THE MUMMY RETURNS**, **SHREK** meets its challenge brilliantly. A step beyond the **TOY STORY** movies in terms of its detailed renderings of real life objects and characters, **SHREK** does something that no previous digitally animated movie dared: it focuses the story on human and human-like creatures, as opposed to toys or hugs. Shrek and the Princess are well-rounded characters—pardon the pun—whose faces and body language reflect a wide variety of emotions and attitudes.

And unlike the by-the-numbers characters in **THE MUMMY RETURNS**, they are also disarmingly eccentric. My favorite moment in the movie is when Shrek, the misanthropic-is-only-skin-deep ogre, and the heretofore somewhat self-deluded Princess Fiona show their burgeoning affection for each other by exchanging impromptu balloons they have made by inflating a frog and snake. Move over, T. Hanks and M. Ryan!

Meanwhile, I can't help but wonder whether the timing of Shrek's release a few weeks before the threatened Actor's Guild strike wasn't actually intended as a warning to the thespian community. The message: "You are expendable."

Unfortunately, good characters alone, whether digitally animated or not, do not a satisfying movie experience make, and somewhere around mid-stream, **SHREK** seems to drown in its own lofty

aspirations. This is all the more frustrating because the first half is about as winning and funny as anything I've seen recently. In the classic **FRACTURED FAIRYTALES** manner, **SHREK** takes storybook characters from childhood and puts them into very un-storybook-like situations. The biggest laugh in the movie comes early on, when the Gingerbread Man, who is being tortured by the henchman of the evil prince, screams a defiant, "Eat me!" Shrek's irritation at having the characters from hundreds of fairytales forcibly relocated to his swamp is also extremely funny, as is the ogre's journey to the evil prince's castle, a kind of medieval theme park that Walt Disney would have found much to his liking. Shrek's journey to save the princess is inventive and exciting, and the interaction between Shrek (voiced by Mike Meyers) and the princess (voiced by Cameron Diaz) is at first charmingly goofy, and elicited not a single "Yuck!" from the not-quite-adolescent audience I saw it with.

But then the movie shifts directions, veering away from wacky action to more serious interaction. It was as if the moviemakers had

decided that they were going to show just how far you could take this relationship thing in a digitally animated format. The movie soon degenerates into a soap opera where feelings take precedence over action, and misunderstandings rule. Not to sound like an insensitive lout, but this interpersonal stuff was just not enough to carry half of a movie, especially one that started off so high on the zainness meter.

Contributing to this questionable shift was the fact that the antagonist, the evil prince (voiced by John Lithgow), wasn't powerful enough or, for that matter, evil enough to present a viable threat to our couple and their nascent love affair. When he finally realizes what is going on and attempts to offer resistance, he is quickly and easily defeated, and not by Shrek but by the most blatant example of *deus ex machina* I've seen in a long time.

Granted, this is a fractured fairytale, and it's supposed to break the rules. But there are three rules that an extended narrative, no matter how brilliantly animated, cannot break without putting itself in jeopardy: It must have a beginning, it must have a middle, and it

Shrek

Dreamworks, 2000. Voice Artists: Mike Meyers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow. Directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson. Written by Ted Elliott & Terry Rossio and Joe Stillman and Roger S. H. Schulman. Based on the book by William Steig. Produced by Jeffrey Katzenberg. Screenplay by John H. Williams. Production Designers: James Hughes, Phil Seitz.

must have an end. Shrek, once he finally accepts that he is in love with the princess, doesn't have to lift a finger to fight for her. That means no suspense, no frustration, no anxiety. None of the exquisite tensions that, when finally released at the climactic moment of the third act, make the audience sigh collectively in relief and leave the theater feeling as if they have had a complete, totally satisfying emotional experience. I sure didn't.

I have one more bone to pick with **SHREK**. Why does a movie that spends so much time and effort promoting tolerance for people that look and act differently spend an equal amount of time and effort making fun of the vertically challenged? Moviemakers with such obviously good intentions shouldn't leave moviegoers with a message like, "Everyone deserves to be treated with sensitivity and respect... except, of course, short people." C-60



Dear Senator,

I gotta tell ya, that's some impressive work you're doing there. I guess by now you must be pretty accustomed to making history on a national and global scale, but even by that yardstick, you're really gone above and beyond the call. My hat's off to you, brother. *Pshew.*

I'm talking of course about Senate bill S. 792, the so-called Media Marketing Accountability Act, the one you're co-sponsoring with Sen. Hillary Clinton. This is the bill that, in your words, seeks "to help parents meet the increasingly difficult challenge of...protecting [their children] from the harmful messages pervading our culture." It will do this, you say, by giving the FTC power to prosecute film companies for marketing R-rated films to teens and children. In the course of the past few months, you've become quite the advocate of this revolutionary bit of legislation, taking on MPAA president Jack Valenti in its defense, even writing an impassioned letter to the President, seeking his support. And who can blame you, seeing as how, with this one bill, you hold in your hands some pretty heady power, not the least being the ability to strip the U.S. of one of its most dearly held liberties: the right to free speech?

Yes, I know you've answered this accusation before. Most specifically, you addressed the charge at length in the June 1, 2001 issue of *Daily Variety*, in a letter written in reply to an article in which Jack Valenti threatened to disband the motion picture rating system rather than cooperate with your plan. Your response was the standard litany that you've floated in an attempt to calm your critics, claiming that your bill, "does not give the Federal Trade Commission any authority to regulate content... [nor] does it give the FTC the authority to determine what movies are appropriate for kids." You go on to acknowledge that, "[obviously,] there are free speech concerns any time the government restricts speech..." but then cautions that "the First Amendment is not a license to deceive, regardless of whether you are selling moisturizer or movies."

Well, honestly, I'm half-tempted to concede your latter point. Once a media company begins regarding its output as product rather than as a genuine art-form, they lay themselves open to that kind of analogy. God knows, it's not as if the studios are guilt-free in this drama. In fact, I can well imagine that the whole mess started when some Einstein—a person whose greatest, previous responsibility was probably gaining more shelf space for laundry detergent—decided that it would be an

absolutely *super* idea to plus company profits by "opening up new markets" for his studio's more mature output; specifically, that market that still busied itself trading POKEMON cards in the schoolyard. When one thinks about the utter stupidity of the tactic itself, and the bottom-line mindset from which it stemmed, one has to admit that there's a certain ironic justice in seeing the

AN OPEN LETTER TO SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN

studios hoist on their own, market-driven pears.

But, Senator, it's one thing to call the studios out—and deservedly so—for their moronic behavior, and another to gut the First Amendment for the sake of protecting America's youth. And make no mistake about it, despite your soothing assurances, this bill is a genuine threat to free speech.

What's so unsettling about your arguments is the apparently willful effort you've made to blind yourself from long-range implications that your defense doesn't come anywhere near addressing. Your bill, "...does not give the [FTC]... authority to regulate content," nor does it give them "authority to determine what movies are appropriate for kids." Not directly, but no law operates in a vacuum, and the repercussions of this law would be to make studios more reluctant to finance films that explore more controversial, adult, and dangerous content, for fear of being hauled into court should ads for such films fall upon innocent eyes. (Should Spielberg do time for SCHINDLER'S LIST?) Meanwhile, you've tried to shrug off the threat of this law by suggesting in other venues that the only ones who need fear it are those who continue to market R-rated films to children. But you've so far managed to gloss over the question of how our newly-empowered government guardians of morality will determine when an ad has been targeted specifically to kids. Since no studio, even at the height of this dementia, saw fit to advertise during HISTERIA! or in the pages of *Highlights for Children*, what other medium would you suggest is so specifically child-oriented that a studio could be found guilty of the crime of youth-pollution? Early-evening prime time? (Then what's FRIENDS doing airing at eight P.M.?)

Perhaps general-market magazines? (What, you don't want your kids looking at *Time*?) Comic books, maybe? (Never read any Frank Miller, didja?)

Most damning for your protestations of benevolent intent, though, is the fact that to date you've failed to acknowledge one little bump in your plan that you most assuredly are not ignorant of: that the R-rating

is not itself a prohibition against underage viewers, but only a recommendation of adult supervision. There is no rule of law behind this rating. It is, in fact, a voluntary designation, deployed solely to advise parents as to whether a film's content is suitable for their children. The system to which the R-rating belongs has thrived for over three decades on the logical precept that parents—more than any government agency—know best what is appropriate for their children.

To attempt to turn this system to any other end is a perversion of its sometimes controversial, but mostly useful, function. It turns out, in this case, that Mr. Valenti is perfectly right in his assertion that no studio should be complicit in such a perversion. His recommendation that the rating system be disbanded if your law goes into effect thus becomes the only logical response. (Think it can't happen? Never heard of a studio releasing a film unrated rather than accepting the dreaded NC-17 rating? How often do you go to movies, Senator?)

I'm not the only one who feels this way: in fact, I've got some high-powered company. It appears that George W.—having received your impassioned invitation to join your crusade—couldn't move fast enough to tactfully decline, suggesting, according to his deputy press secretary, that it would be better to "[provide] parents with the tools they need to protect their children..."

So let's total up your achievements: Not only have you succeeded in threatening the First Amendment, you've also confronted parents with the possibility that the sole tool by which they can determine what's good for their kids will be going away very, very soon. Most miraculous, though, from my point of view, is that with one modest proposal, you've somehow managed to get me to side with George W. Bush. Next up: The Earth reverses rotation and David Letterman admits he's an incorruptible optimist.

That's some heavy work for one man. Congrats are in order, but I won't be the one giving them.

Sincerely yours,

Dan Persons
Editor
Cinefantastique

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